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Paul Willard

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[Humphrey Ian. Georgia]

First published London, 1832.

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OUR ISLAND:

COMPRISING

FORGERY, A TALE;

AND

THE LUNATIC, A TALE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE object of the Author, in presenting these Tales to the Public, has been to illustrate some striking defects of our jurisprudence. If in the accomplishment of this plan, he shall have succeeded in combining amusement with profit, his aim will be crowned with reward, and the task of arranging his narratives amply repaid.

April, 1832.*

* Since the Tale of "Forgery" was written, the capital punishment lately awarded against that crime, has been repealed, except in cases of forging Wills and Powers of Attorney.

APR 16 1951

FORGERY, A TALE.

CHAPTER I.

THE DAWN OF LIFE.

"Here be all the pleasures
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season."

MILTON.

ROGER MORTIMER, the son of a gentleman of ancient family and fair possessions in the county of Bedford, was born in 1792, at his father's house there. He had not any brother, but an only sister, a year younger than himself, was the companion in whom he delighted, sharing by turns the gay and sad hours of his infancy.

Mr. Mortimer, to other traits of a character without blemish and held in general repute, added that of an inviolable attachment to his estate, where he had long resided amidst the most fervent tokens of popular favour. He could never be prevailed upon to imitate the curiosity of his neighbours and countrymen, who, availing themselves of the peace of 1814, long revelled in boundless continental excursions. He heard without emotion of the spires of Saint Petersburg, the broad streets of the newly risen Moscow, the crowded fair of Dantzic, and the noble halls of the monarch of Austria. With equal indifference did he receive the accounts of Italian, Swiss, and Flemish adventurers; and neither yielded to impatience nor ambition, when assailed at all points by the universal guests of Paris. Mrs. Mortimer, indeed, is said once or twice to have urged the "home tour," on behalf more, as she devoutly declared, of their son Roger, than her own inclinations; and finding that hope unavailing, to have pleaded for "Paris,

and only Paris;" but her husband, though passing kind, was inexorable. A habitual deafness of the right ear contributed not a little to this inflexible composure. Yet, although proof against the attractions of foreign capitals, and the blandishments of continental society, Mr. Mortimer was an efficient magistrate in his neighbourhood, and maintained an extensive acquaintance amongst the gentry of his county. It was neither through ignorance nor bigotry, that he preferred the circle of his friends and tenants at home, to the brilliant coteries of distant lands.

It may be easily conceived, that Roger, the only son of this respectable family, was no common favourite. He received the rudiments of his education according to the discipline of modern tactics, that is to say, without stick, or rod, or corporal chastisement. His mother too, the patroness of Mrs. William's spelling, of Le Noir, and of Hamilton, directed the early advances of her son's literature in conformity with those improvements. A struggle (if a harmless discussion between her husband and herself could be called such) took place on the subject of a public school. Mrs. Mortimer disliked fagging, and verses, and effrontery; the father of Roger, on the contrary, justified the first, approved the second, and gave his unqualified approbation to the last.

Young Mortimer, in the end, was sent to Eton; for the lady, in this instance, yielded to the force of precedent and the importunity of her lord, although the urgent solicitations of the boy were thought to have had the most cogent effect towards the withdrawing of her opposition.

Eton, however, had but few charms for a disciple of the Hamiltonian system; and Roger, finding that the Roscii in that seminary of "the world's great ways" were the idols of Parnassus, betook himself to more active schemes, and became the very head and chief of all novelties and amusements.

Doctor Keate, a man of sufficient erudition, was then the principal master, and his occasional personal visitations were the only means of recalling Roger to his senses, amidst an universal course of whim and dissipation.

Boyhood and whipping being at an end, Roger Mortimer, consistently with his father's plan, left home for Oxford, where the unrestrained gaiety of his disposition broke forth in excesses which, although not fatal to his honour as a man, added little to his reputation for learning or application. He became the wild, thoughtless youth, whose joyous and generous sallies were wont to delight his audience, but who, alas! was too soon the first to experience their desertion, when the terrors of the college menaced his unruly career. But he was not vicious, nor a rebel against the government of the university; so that while his errors did not escape censure, he never risked the higher penalty of expulsion. Nor could it be expected that one so giddy and destitute of ambition should have been a "first class man;" indeed, it was rather a matter of surprise, looking to the increased toil of the academical examinations, that he should have summoned industry enough to have succeeded in attaining to the ordinary honours.

We follow him to his home in Bedfordshire, clothed with his hardly-earned degree, and impatient to gain his father's consent to a tour on the continent. At this critical season, however, Mr. Mortimer died. This accident happened through apoplexy, it was said, though the physicians were unable to agree amongst themselves as to the exact cause of their prtient's decease, the debate being long, and even loud, after their departure from the scene of mortality. However this may be, the head of the family was cut off in the vigour of life, without even the respite of a day between the interval of illness and death; and so suddenly had he been called away, that his worldly concerns remained unsettled. Dying thus without a will, Mr. Mortimer left Byrdwood Hall and its fair acres at the entire disposal and discretion of his son Roger, and his widow and daughter depended on the meager pittance which the law would award, and the kindness of the heir assign them.

This was the dawn of Roger Mortimer's life, and it is from this point that we begin our present history.

The newness of his condition, the estimation in which his father's memory was held, the already won popularity which descended upon him, were attractions

which for some time determined the young land-owner to walk in the steps of his parent. He advocated the delights and advantages of a residence at home, went round to the dwellings of his tenants in person, urged (as his father had done before him) the appointment of district committees to inspect the condition of the poor, to repress imposture, and detect extravagance, and even devoted himself to the recommendation of the late Mr. Mortimer's favourite idea of establishing perpetual tribunals for the trial of all petty offences. "There would then," that worthy gentleman was wont to say, "be no more crowded gaols; there would be far fewer reputed thieves; and many a misguided boy would be returned instantly to his family with a punishment proportioned to his offence, while the innocent would cease to lie for months in profligate and expensive prisons, at the mercy of perjured or mistaken witnesses." Such sentiments were deemed harmless crotchets in the county; but the tread of vice was now becoming so open and unflinching, that the most idle theory found ready listeners in those who but a short time since would have readily signed a certificate of insanity against the authors of it.

But it was not only through the acts of his ancestor, and the policy which dictated his own early footsteps, that the new possessor of Byrdwood Hall had reason to think himself fortunate; every possible circumstance had united to make his dayspring of life peculiarly auspicious.

The property on which he lived, though small, was unincumbered as far as he knew, by the ruinous seals of a mortgage deed, and safe in his own hands from the all-devouring zeal of agency. Though the acres were neither thousands nor tens of thousands, all were rich, partaking of the best qualities both of water and of soil. Those too who cultivated them were equally fortunate with their owner; they were tithe-free, and emancipated, through the unwearied industry of the neighbouring gentry, from the burden of rates which at one time had sadly weighed on that part of the country. The luxurious and unseasonable feasting of the parochial dignitaries had long since yielded to a more firm and frugal distribution of those levies, which the farmer com-

plained not to pay for the use of his suffering countrymen, provided that the necessitous and the aged shared them. But this great end had not been effected without a mixture (too frequent) of clamour and hypocrisy; yet the struggle, made with calmness and decency, was successful. The tenantry, relieved from the smart under which they had so long suffered, grew more attached to their homes, and grateful to their deliverers.

These, however, were not all the advantages which they reaped from a generous and benevolent landlord. An enemy to every species of oppression and slavery, Mr. Mortimer had, for many years before his decease, surrendered his rights of game to the occupiers of his various farms. Conscious, that although he could not legally invade the land of a stranger, however situate in his manor, he could yet shackle his own tenantry, and forbid them from the sports of the field, he waved those immunities, because he felt that, as a just and thinking man, he ought not to turn them to his amusement or advantage. Each tenant on the manor, then, had the game on his land at his own control, and while he hailed his harvests, risen to ripeness and abundance, and unmolested by the tooth of vermin, he rejoiced heartily in a privilege, the more pleasing, as it seemed to be a part of that liberty which as a cultivator of the soil, he thought he had a title to enjoy.

Such (if the love of a neighbouring population be esteemed a blessing) were a few of the good fortunes which befel a youth just launched upon the world.

Miss Mortimer, who will be found to bear no inconsiderable part in the transactions which form the subjects of future pages, was eminently qualified to temper the levity of her brother, and in some measure to remedy the defects of his unfortunate education. Of her personal attractions and accomplishments we are not able to speak in the impassioned style of ancient novelists; they were such, however as to command the admiration of those who had the fortune to mix in the circle where she visited. The description of her mental endowments is a more easy, perhaps a more grateful task. Nature had gifted her with a strong intellect, which imparted to her actions a firmness of purpose, rare, but yet most valuable in woman. Having gone through the

drudgery of languages, and escaped from the leading-strings of learning, she felt the advanced stage she had attained to in no other light than as the means of making herself useful and agreeable. To be proud of her acquisitions, to despise her sex for that softness and delicacy which she knew to be its chief ornament, were faults, which had never vitiated the mind of Miss Mortimer. With such talents, knowledge, and discretion, it cannot be surprising to hear, that wherever her society had been experienced it soon became esteemed and courted.

If this young lady could be said to excel in any one particular accomplishment, it was in painting. Circumstances which had excited the genius of other lovers of the Fine Arts, were propitious to her's also. The beauty of the surrounding landscapes in the neigbourhood where she lived, had very early invited the efforts of an untutored pencil. There was that rapid and discursive traveller, the Ouse, dispending his rich waters on the domain of Byrdwood; now smiling beneath the boughs in the light of the watchful sunbeam, now bubbling on the shallows with a murmur of pleasing melancholy, and anon dashing down the steep with the roar of an Alpine torrent, whilst his distant streams sparkled afar amongst the meadows to the utmost verge of sight. In spite, too, of the flatness of Bedfordshire, the Hall lay sufficiently near the neighbouring frontier to be commanded by the lofty Chilterns, where beech and ash of gigantic size ennobled the summits, and flung out their sinewy limbs into the vale below. The sunny glade, the plenteous and verdant pasturage, the briskly sportive cattle, formed the foreground of the picture, whilst a many-coloured wood, reposing in majestic silence, closed the prospect.

Roger Mortimer was walking with his sister one summer's evening on a raised terrace which looked out towards the view we have been describing, when she availed herself of the rare opportunity which then offered itself of suggesting to her brother the result of some serious thoughts which she had deemed of importance to his future welfare. Differing much in domestic pursuits, the kindest unanimity had, nevertheless, prevailed between them. The youth had as yet sufficient sense

to make sacrifices for the happiness of his mother and sister, while, on their side, they returned his respect and affection with every tenderness.

"My mother and I, Roger," said Miss Mortimer, "are anxious upon a subject concerning you which is really worth notice, although you never mention it to us."

"And what may that be, dear Mary?" returned her brother.

"You might guess it, Roger, without much difficulty. My mother would have talked to you herself, only that she dislikes lecturing, as you well know."

"Well, but what is it, Mary? what have I done now? Have you found out some fresh fault in me? Don't I go round to all the neighbours, and behave civilly to all the neighbours, and stand up for reforms, and improvements of all sorts? What would you have of me in addition to all this?"

"No fault: I never, that is to say, scarcely ever, do find fault with you, Roger; I have no right to do so:" said the young lady, apprehensive of some misconception; "every body praises your spirited behaviour in public, but we think that there is one thing still wanting, and that is——."

"And that is," resumed Mortimer, imitating his sister's arch address.

"And that is——" said she again.

"What? What?" exclaimed the young man with impatience.

"A wife—Roger, to be sure." He was silent for a moment with astonishment. "You very well know," added she, observing the surprise which the disclosure had occasioned; "you very well know," she repeated, in a mild and conciliating tone, "that we, that is, my mother and myself, can live upon our income, either in the neighbourhood or elsewhere, with the most heartfelt contentedness, provided that you are well and happy. Your situation in the county requires that you should enlarge your circle, which under present circumstances cannot be done with convenience, and our mother agrees with me that it would be the best for your interest to marry.

"You are a generous girl," exclaimed the young man

with emotion, "but as far as the turning my mother and you out of Byrdwood Hall is concerned, I will never do it for the sake of any wife;—never," he added with increased energy."

"Softly, softly, brother," returned Miss Mortimer; "no one questions your excellent disposition; but tell me now, in confidence, has not this project sometimes entered into your thoughts?"

"If you will press me closely," said he, "I must confess that once or twice it may have."

"Then you agree with us," replied his sister, "that there is no objection to the plan."

"So far from that, I will even tell you the name of the girl whom, if ever I marry at all, I am determined to have, and no other, but that is always provided that my mother and sister continue in the old spot."

"Never mind that, Roger; but tell me," said the other, smiling with an air of curiosity, "may I be bold enough to claim your promise—who is the lassie, brother?"

"Why, as for that, Mary—I have no particular objection to let my mother know; but, really, I had not the slightest intention of disturbing the family with any arrangement of that kind, I assure you, upon my honour."

"Nobody questions your honour, my dear brother," said the young lady with a glance of evident disappointment, fearful to repeat the inquiry.

"Well then," said he, "as you have been a very good girl, and have not plagued me with questions and entreaties upon the subject—you are too well bred to do that Mary,"—he paused, to the infinite mortification of the party whom he addressed, who, however, had now the courage to ask,

"What then, Roger?"

"Why, then—Mary," slowly proceeded Mortimer, "if ever I change my present condition, it shall be for the sake of Jane Hamilton;—that is," he added, hesitatingly, "provided you and Mrs. Mortimer——"

"Now, pray don't, Roger, don't mention it—I am so much obliged to you for this discovery; it will give my mother so much pleasure! But stay—Mrs. Hamilton is the rich merchant's widow, is she not?"

"Yes," was the reply. "You know her very well."

"And her daughters too," replied the sister; "but I asked, because,—she must be immensely rich, if she is the merchant's widow."

"Rich enough, Mary."

"And are you sure that you will be a favourite with the old lady, for I am told, that she prides herself upon her money, Roger?"

"I have had no reason to complain of my reception at Alderbury Park, or Golden Grove, as the common people call it. Mrs. Hamilton is absolutely pressing with hospitality whenever I look in; and, besides, think of our family. The honour of alliance would be on our side, I think."

"Pardon me, brother," said Miss Mary, "I confess honesty enough to tell you that Jane Hamilton is much more to my taste than her mother; and I fear that I have been impertinent in asking you as I did about her love of grandeur; but you must take it in good part, and most likely the respectability of our rank would vanquish any scruple on the score of money, though I know what my mother will say upon that subject."

"It does not follow always, Mary," said her brother, "that because a person is so lucky as to be rich, she must be proud and disdainful of every body who has not quite so much; and I assure you, that as far as I have noticed Mrs. Hamilton, although her tastes, to be sure, are not quite in unison with ours, she appears rather a humble woman, than otherwise."

"Well," returned Miss Mortimer, "it is not for me to contradict you there, and I do sincerely respect Jane, who, I know, is neither haughty, nor presuming in the least. But, come, Roger, you have got our secret, and we have managed to find your's out, and see, Richard is coming to tell us that coffee is ready."

Upon this, both returned to the hall, where we will leave them for the present, enjoying the full life of a new discussion, and on a subject far more interesting to the parties themselves than to any stranger.

Some account of Mrs. Hamilton and her family, will close the present chapter. In the early part of the nineteenth century it came to be generally understood in

England, that the mere possession of wealth and property did not confer on their owners the right of universal dominion in society. Thus situated, the haughty heirs of oriental grandeur, the richly-freighted merchant, the casual inheritor of accumulated legacies, the lately-gifted fortune-hunter, were constrained to feel that they no longer held the empire over the souls of men which they had been wont. But pride could not be so easily subdued in the hearts of these idols of fortune, so that they were obliged to have recourse to other measures, (the safety-valves, as it were, of their constitutions,) for the purpose of gratifying their darling passion. Sunday Schools, which had struggled for years with patient virtue, suddenly found new patronesses, and while they lost some part of their original independence, partook most abundantly of unexpected opulence. Charitable institutions of all kinds, hospitals, societies for the avowed promotion of good, all caught the genial torrent in its flow, and although these benefactions excited for a time the surprise of the many, their cause might be easily traced to the new light which had arisen in the minds of these moneyed grandees. The rude, unshodden peasant shuddered to find himself caressed by the dame of high degree. Literature dawned upon the unlearned, and the most uncouth tenant of the plain was suddenly consigned to the schoolmaster and the patroness.

Mrs. Hamilton's wealth was immense, almost unbounded. The widow of a banker whose capital had been accustomed to double itself during each interval of seven years, the infinity of her resources had placed great advantages at her disposal.

Her family consisted of a son, Augustus, and three daughters, of whom, Jane, the second, was esteemed the prettiest.

It might be supposed, that Alderbury Park was a display of gorgeous pageantry, blazoned with every ornament, and adorned with all the gilded finery of a toy-shop, that its inmates were distinguished for their dazzling and expensive apparel, and that ostentation glowed throughout every department. Not so: Mrs. Hamilton had not so ill availed herself of the modern tactics of society, as to allow so conspicuous an array of undis-

guised arrogance. Her dress, and that of her daughters, were studiously simple; even her domestics were restrained with all practicable strictness from parade in clothes, and a more offensive person could not be seen at her gate than a powdered and silked lacquey. The house, too, was in keeping with the external humility, and, which was more strange, the only son, the squire, affected a plainness and condescension which were irresistible.

This conduct, added to their extensive charities, made the family of the Hamiltons, in the eyes of the neigbourhood, patterns of modesty and virtue. But although thus outwardly unostentatious, Mrs. Hamilton was cautious of introductions, and took care to conciliate by every possible art the noblesse and higher gentry of the county. For this purpose, she was not sparing of her invitations, nor, if they were accepted, of her dainties. Then it was, that profusion and elegance were rivals in her banquets, and the frugal cover yielded to the costliest delicacies. Her daughters too, still plain and unadorned, were instructed on those occasions to strain their efforts to please, and to display all their accomplishments; a part which they fulfilled with the strictest obedience, for what young lady does not flutter at the sight of a coronet, and what mother regards not with envy an alliance with nobility?

Idle were the complaints of the Dobbinses, and the Browns, of the villages, of that truly unpretending class, who breathe but for tales of gentle gossip, and who comprehended not the gulf-like distinction which lay between them and the objects of their displeasure. In vain they proclaimed the genealogies of the Hamiltons in the tea-sipping circles around them; the rich heard them not, and the poor (until the happening of a circumstance which shall be related by and by) were captivated by the generosity of these new patrons, and obedient to the hand which fed them, sounded aloud the gratitude and devotion which they felt.

The acquaintance between this opulent family and the Mortimers had arisen, as is the case with most introductions among strangers, by accident. Mrs. Hamilton was pleased with the gay and easy manners of the young land-owner, and her daughters viewed him with

an eye no less favourable. All knew the pretensions which he had to family, and imagined, besides, that his fortune was equal to his rank. Jane, the second daughter, in particular, admired the address which distinguished Mortimer, and which he had inherited from his father; and as a preference of this sort is not slow of discovery, a mutual regard soon sprang up between a sprightly lad of two-and-twenty and a fair damsel of nineteen. Neither, however, entertained any idea that they were in earnest, for Mortimer, as we have seen, never dreamed of a marriage-contract, and Jane Hamilton was too strongly beset by the attentions of others, some wooing her, some her fortune, to be irrecoverably entangled in the first campaign. However, certain it is, that an attachment existed on both sides, yet with so slender a foresight, that the want of noble blood might be urged with as much probability on the one hand, if the matter should become serious, as the inequality of wealth on the other. Of the progress of this courtship, of the rivals which Mortimer met with, and various incidents of importance which took place at this moment, we shall proceed to speak in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER II.

THE CALVINISTS.

"Hypocrisy is folly. It is much easier, safer, and pleasanter to be the thing which a man aims to appear, than to keep up the appearance of what he is not."—CECIL.

EACH of the young ladies at Alderbury Park had her share of admirers, and we may add, supposed admirers, as one sometimes speaks of a manor, or reputed manor, For, fond of triumph, and the "swelling train" of captives, the gay and beauteous belles of every age delight in ideas of extended conquest, feeling, in the fulness of their power, those magic words of Cæsar, "I came, I saw, I conquered." But of this gaudy group of flatter-

ers, few, indeed, will venture beyond the very brim of the cup, conscious, like some crafty wasp on the brink of sweets, that to fall below would commit them to a hopeless struggle.

Jane Hamilton was more fortunate than her sisters, —than her neighbours; indeed, it may be said, than her sex in general, considering the vast and increasing monopoly of club-houses. She had, perhaps, three serious suitors, two of whom, though under the ban of a refusal, yet lingered on in soul-alluring hope; the third was Roger Mortimer. Of the first, little need be said, because, notwithstanding his being the principal in a duel, which will be mentioned before the chapter closes, his name is otherwise of little importance in this history. He was the soft-hearted son of a country gentleman, whose residence lay at no great distance from the park, and was tempted to his grand experiment more through the importunities of a coaxing mother, than his own natural desire either for adventure or for a change of his condition. Miss Hamilton had declined his advances, in a manner which betokened as much contempt as decision, and he retired to his chimney corner, which he loved, to hear the consolations of his doating parent, and imbibe from her fresh expectations of overcoming his obdurate beauty. Passing him by for the present, we introduce a different character on the stage.

James Priminheere was descended from the Priminheeres of Callow Hall. He had one brother, Charles, and these two represented that ancient house, their parents having long since left them in possession of the family estate. They could trace their ancestry from a remote period, though it had been but lately that the name had been admitted among the gentry of Bedfordshire; for their forefathers had made common cause with the Buttons, the Hallinghams, and the Udalls, those early Puritans in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and endured the various fortunes which befel that devoted body of men during a period of nearly two centuries. Emancipated at length from the scourge of active persecution, they still shared, in common with many of their brethren, the obloquy and neglect which so often pursue those who dissent from a vast majority.

It was even as lately as the beginning of the nineteenth century, that the professors of methodism and puritanism had no cause to shrink from a public avowal of their religious sentiments.

Titus Priminheere, the father of the James and Charles above mentioned, succeeded, under political circumstances of great advantage, to the property which amidst many wrecks and revolutions still remained to him. The Dissenters had increased in numbers; amongst them the Calvinists (to which particular sect Mr. Priminheere belonged): the spirit of the age favoured a far more liberal state of things than had ever existed, or could have been imagined by the most sanguine; the government of the country felt the necessity of securing the affections of every man in the kingdom, and the Separatists of all sorts were regarded on all sides, even by high Mother Church, with more respect than heretofore, and occasionally even with distinction. Yet, at the very moment when it no longer became dangerous or disgraceful to espouse the cause which conscience approved, (such is the will of Providence, or the perversion of reason, or the instability of human affairs, as people may choose to call it,) luxury, ease and carelessness crept in tranquilly on the other side. These syrens lulled to sleep the descendants of those same men who had suffered and even fought for so many years, that simplicity and self-denial might, in their persons at least, be substituted for display and indulgence.

But Titus Priminheere had not retrograded at once from the primitive plainness of his profession. Living in affluence as he did, he yet maintained for some time the rigid discipline of those who had gone before him, amidst the wiles of luxury, and the temptations of extravagance. He never entirely abandoned the fastnesses of his education, nor surrendered himself to intemperance and vice; but while he thus refrained from violating the principles of the sect by his own example, he allowed his children more than the customary freedom of old. Pride, too, would make strange inroads upon him during the latter years of his life, so that he exclaimed, if not in voice, in heart: "Behold the goodly heritage which I have chosen!" It was rumoured in his neighbourhood, that at the last hour his end was not undisturbed;

but, however this be, his charities and extensive benevolence were long remembered when the supposed circumstances of his death were forgotten.

The sons of Mr. Priminheere, although they omitted to follow their father's footsteps in his early days, forgot not his precepts (such is the force of habit) to the last moment of their lives. As they proceeded on their varied career, the ancient principle would often waken in their minds, and in one, at least, amidst all the hurrying cares of time, it stayed unfaded.

James, the elder brother, was the second unsuccessful suitor to Jane Hamilton. He was the actual resident at Callow Hall, for although there was a tenancy in common, according to the father's will, it suited Charles's disposition to apply himself to business, and he chose to follow the practice of conveyancing.

Neither of these young men were at this time in a situation to be envied. Both had strayed still more widely than their parent from the doctrines and example of their church; and whether the feeling arose from the prejudices of education, or from some other less obvious source, it was apparent enough that they had embarked upon the great waves of life with hearts ill at ease.

For some days after the disclosure of that resolution which forbade all farther access to his intended bride, the disappointed wooer brooded upon his misfortune in sorrow and in silence. He sought his chapel, and strove to gain comfort from his favourite preacher; but instead of the still solacing language of a kind pastor, he heard only denunciations against an unholy alliance with unbelievers. Stung with indignation, he hastened from the house of worship, and burying himself in his chamber, gave way to fresh transports, and reflections still more gloomy. He had been repulsed with disdain. Conscious that in addressing one of a different religion he had erred from his creed, well knowing, too, that cupidity and self-exaltation had prompted him to the desperate step, almost maddened by the turn the affair had taken, for, being of a handsome person, he had never contemplated a defeat, he yielded to each fierce fit of passion as it rose, and cherished an inbred revenge, which only waited for a victim. At this juncture he gained the intelligence that Mortimer was not an infre-

quent visiter at Alderbury. Following up the report, he discovered that his rival had been seen to dance at the county ball with Miss Jane. Jealousy and rage required nothing further.

"Shameful," he ejaculated, "to jilt me for a dolt like Roger Mortimer."

It was on a Saturday evening, and his brother Charles, who had just arrived for a short holiday, was approaching, and had overheard that impatient exclamation. "James," said he, "what's the matter?"

"How d'ye do?—I'm glad to see you," was the reply of the elder, who held out his hand under evident signs of agitation.

"But, James," said his brother, after they had disposed of some common-place inquiries, "something has happened, for I overheard a very fierce speech about Mortimer. Is he the Mortimer of Byrdwood?"

"Why, Charles, I think there is matter enough; that girl Jane Hamilton has refused me, for a man who can scarcely say his A B C, and has got neither money nor credit, I believe."

"This is the first time that you have told me of your being serious, James," said his brother. "Have you really been refused?"

"I have been discarded, rejected, turned off, any thing you please, by way of reproach."

"Then I can say no more, but that you have reason to thank God for it, brother. What right have we to seek an alliance with persons so utterly different from us in every respect and every pursuit?"

"Nay, now, Charles," replied the other peevishly, "it's hardly fair for you to talk so, after Julius Cæsar and the Wedding Day: and the lecture which Mr. Fastenon read you from the pulpit."

"Five years ago, brother, I went to a play here, a mere strolling theatre, and you have never ceased since to upbraid me with it. I think that the minister was severe enough, without a fiftieth edition of the business from you."

"But, Charles," returned the other, "if you don't go to plays in town now, you attend balls and musical parties, and they, you well know, are quite as bad."

"I visit two or three families occasionally in the

evening," said Charles Priminheere, "whose daughters play and sing a little, but I can assure you, James, that no immoral or ungodly songs are introduced, only a ballad or two, the simplest in the world, and that is all."

"But the balls, Charles?"

"As to balls, to public assemblies that is to say, I never go near such places of amusement; and the most that you can say is, that I don't refuse to stand up for a little dancing after the music, and even that but very seldom."

"Did'nt you go to Miss Willis's, Charles?"

"I suppose you heard that from Miss Dorville, brother, a mischievous maiden she is. Mrs. Willis gave what is called a fête champêtre, and there was a little gamboling on the lawn afterwards."

"Gamboling? quadrilles and waltzes, and mazurkas, and——"

"Where did you pick up those unhallowed names, brother?" exclaimed Charles with more impatience than he had showed hitherto. "I am willing to admit that these things are not quite right, but how can you justify so great an act as marrying into this unholy family? What would our father have said, James? To tell you the truth, I feel that I am no better than other people; but because I wander now and then, there is no reason why you should do this sad thing."

"A pretty argument truly, brother," replied the elder Priminheere, "example, and not precept, Charles, if you please."

"Which example I shall be exceedingly glad to take from my elder brother," tartly answered the younger.

"Who lives in the country, and attends to the wants of his neighbourhood and his chapel, while his younger brother is wasting his time and ruining his soul at musical entertainments," replied James.

"James!" cried the young man, striking his forehead, "spare me these constant, these bitter reproaches. I justify not the amusements of my vacant hours, but do for one moment consider what our father would have said to you, if this fatal love of Jane Hamilton, whom we all know to be a flirt, had taken place in his lifetime?"

"Charles, Charles!" said his brother, "between ourselves, much as I respect the memory of our father, I do sincerely believe that he would have rejoiced at the increase of wealth and consequence which such a match as this would be likely to confer upon me. The old gentleman loved the good things of this life as well as any body, only he dared not say so, for fear of Mr. Fastenon."

"I differ from you there," answered Charles Priminheere, "and I begin to fear that you have sadly gone back from the great principles."

"Rank hypocrisy, Charles, rank hypocrisy; come cheer up, I meant no harm in what I said to you just now; I do not think in my own mind that there is any great harm in your little amusements, only we are so priest-ridden here in the country, that one might be disowned for acknowledging such a monstrous liberalism." Charles was silent, and his brother went on. "Come now, and we will consult over a bottle of wine, (an indulgence I rarely allow myself,) how I may be revenged of this Mortimer."

"Intemperance and revenge! Good God! what shall I do?" exclaimed Charles.

"Come, Charles," repeated the other rather impatiently.

"James," said the lawyer, "I will not do this thing; I have enough to answer for, I know; but I have never, either in my profession or out of it, attempted in the slightest degree to hurt any man in his feelings or character; that is the golden rule which we abide by."

"Charles, Charles," returned his brother, "ridiculous! don't come here to defend your calumniating tribe: and besides, you acknowledge that you go to all these places, with a conviction that you are doing wrong; what can be worse? I only wanted your counsel in this affair, to see whether any steps could be taken to give me a chance of securing this girl and her fortune."

"Counsel, and kind counsel too, you may always expect from me, although on this occasion you well know on which side it will be."

"Well, well," replied James, "I will take it on your own terms, only come into the house, and let us endeavour to subdue all feelings of anger and impatience."

Charles, who owed mainly to his brother the recommendations which had been the means of increasing his business, was accustomed to bear his sudden sallies with singular temperance, for although cold and reserved to strangers, the violence of James's temper was allowed to revel at home with impunity. No reply, therefore, was given to this last admonition, which the other felt he did not deserve, and both went together into the house.

There is a class of men still in existence, both in towns and country places, but especially in the latter, who, not being exactly Squire Westerns, of Somersetshire immortality, are yet given extremely to hedge alehouses, and the society which frequent the same. These fulfil to the uttermost the propensities which they have imbibed for one sort of company; whilst from the barrenness of a decent population in some neighbourhoods, they are tolerated in families who would be glad enough to repudiate them, but for the awful consequences of solitude. Thus, they play at bowls with the blacksmith, the farmer of a dozen acres, and the traveller, and drink out of Boniface's jug with a patronising air, which captivates the thriving landlord. No joke comes amiss, no occupation is too hard for them; they discuss the affairs of the peer and the plough-boy in one common medley, with a pleasing accuracy and impartiality.

On the next evening they are to be found dancing at the house of some easy private gentleman, whose wife raises no scruple, for her daughters' sake, to their introduction, as "the lads are genteel, and girls like her's can reform any rake." In the winter, some of these strange compounds mix largely in the amusements of the field and of the table; some wonder to and fro in search of pleasurable mischief, their sole employ, whilst a choice and small number, like dormice, doze away the freezing hours, alternately exchanging their lazy firesides for the snug corner in the tap parlour. No rush of intellect, no revolutionary frenzy, no societies for the suppression of vice and immorality, not even the slowly-changing usages of society, have altered the characters and habits of these groups of idlers. Sots and time-destroyers by nature, they wear out life amidst the busy

hum around them, and scarcely lift a hand to succour a dying neighbour.

Mr. Albert Moonshine, the gentleman whom we have said Miss Jane Hamilton had rejected, and who had been urged on by an anxious mother to this exploit, was already one of the veterans at Sam's public-house. He was one of the sleepy idlers, dividing his time between the ale-cask and his chimney corner. How such a person could have been allowed by Mrs. Hamilton to enter the doors of Alderbury would, unexplained, be incomprehensible. But the Moonshine family, though sadly represented by Master Albert (as he was still called in the village), had been of some note in the county, and they were said to have relatives in almost every part of England. Thus appointed, in respect of rank, it was not surprising that the affections of the Hamilton family should be won; and next, Mrs. Moonshine possessed a talismanic power over the mind of her son, which she exerted on great occasions, thus preserving it inviolate.

It was after the exercise of one of these spells, that the youth left the snug nook in his mother's house, and set forth with her to Alderbury, where, for a time, he managed to conduct himself adroitly enough to escape detection. But no sooner had he ventured on the improvident and awful step of soliciting the hand of Miss Jane, than he was unceremoniously rejected. Not that the family at Alderbury had made inquiries concerning him, or knew his domestic habits; but although passable as the son of an ancient country squire, the instant that he entered on the softer task of courtship, his demerits shone out too conspicuously to pass unnoticed, or even unresented. Yet, strange indeed as it may appear, he had scarcely recovered from the confusion of his retreat, before a thought struck him as singular in its results as in its origin. Never imagining that a certain inelegance of manner, acquired by his peculiar habits, had occasioned the mortifying circumstance of the day, he determined doggedly to maintain his post, and extort a love which he had been unable to conciliate. But his perseverance was attended by consequences still more disastrous; for, irritated by the constant visits of so eccentric a suitor, an inquiry was at length made in the neighbourhood.

The truth then came out, and the mistress of Alderbury, overwhelmed with shame and vexation, not only forbade him the house, but discontinued also her visits at Moonshine Court. It was a short time after this event, when Albert bore the part which belongs to this history. He had learnt nearly in the same hour with Priminheere, the news of Mortimer's supposed attachment at the Park, and instantly entertained, in common with the Calvinist, an earnest desire to avenge himself.

The passions of man vary. James Priminheere cherished an indignation against his rival, which if allowed its rein, would have annihilated both body and soul. Albert Moonshine, on the contrary, was jealous and angry, and hated his opponent heartily enough, but it was with the pettishness of a child rather than the rancour of an enemy.

Late on the Saturday evening, when the conversation occurred between the two brothers as we have related, Albert was returning home from the Baldfaced Stag, attended by a number of convivial companions, each valiant for his own opinion, and above all fear. The talk was loud and vociferous, and subjects were canvassed and disposed of with wonderful rapidity, till one of the company fell upon Mr. Moonshine's late disappointment.

"Ha, Master Albert, is it you?" cried Carl Jones, a noted blacksmith of the village, "we've hardly seen you since your accident."

"What accident, Mr. Jones?" said Albert.

"What accident!—ha—ha, what accident, indeed; every body knows of Mr. Moonshine's accident, don't 'em, Tim?"

"Ay, that's what I fancy they do, Carl," answered an owl-like personage, using all his sagacity to keep himself upright.

"He hav'nt taken no notice, that is, I mean, no proper notice of it, though," rejoined Carl. "I'm old enough, and sober enough, to recollect the squabble between Lord Offington and Sir Peregrine Piper, that wa' a very different piece of business, war'nt it?"

"I am very dull, very dull indeed, this evening, gentlemen," said the Squire, almost lethargically absent from the conversation.

"Dull, indeed, Mr. Moonshine," returned the blacksmith; "the company were thinking of your visits at the Park there, Sir."

"When did you beat your wife last, Carl?" was the reply to this disclosure.

"When will you have a wife to beat, Master Albert? Oh! shame, shame, that such a comely lad as you be should be sent to the right-about by a prig like Mortimer."

The blacksmith might have hammered for some time longer, but that the name of Mortimer had conveyed a sound to the ear of the Squire, which seemed instantly to awaken the most lively recollections.

"Mortimer! Mortimer!" roared out Albert, lustily, "the very man——"

"And a very good shot too," exclaimed a gentleman in office, whose name we forbear to mention, in consideration of his rare attendance at these village carousals.

"I don't care for his shooting, Sir," cried Master Albert, "nor for any other man's. That is the man who has caused me this disgrace."

"Bravo! bravo, Sir!" resounded on all sides.

"Well, but what will you do?" said the aforesaid gentleman.

"Ay, now that's a very good question," added the blacksmith: "What will ye do now?"

"What will I do?" echoed the youth, half relapsed already into the drowsiness of his by-gone feast. "What should I do? What would any body else do? Why then, I'll tell ye, gentlemen—pass it over with the contempt it deserves."

"A very fine speech indeed for a coward, Master Albert," said Carl, upon, or rather towards whose head Moonshine immediately directed a potent stroke of his cudgel, which, however, only widened a breach in the blacksmith's hat.

"Hey—hey—mercy—murder—a madman," screamed Jones. "Why—what now? what have I said? only that a coward might make such a speech, not that you made it Master Albert."

"A very critical and admirable apology," said the official man, whose dismissal from his place depended at that moment on the chance of two of his principals

having rode by accident along an adjoining lane, instead of the right road where the company were straggling and scrambling in pitiable confusion.

At this moment another person was seen approaching them, apparently in considerable agitation. He was interjecting some broken sentences, as "That dolt my brother Charles!" "Detested Mortimer," "Jilt of jilts," when the sudden vision of so large a party, and so disordered, arrested his attention. This was no other than James Priminheere, who had been engaged in the double employment of drowning care over the bottle, and striving to bring his brother into his way of thinking. Charles, however, although he could not withstand the allurements of the best Lafitte, was inexorable on the subject of revenging his brother upon Roger Mortimer. The latter, finding his efforts unavailing, had rushed out in a highly exasperated state, and not caring whither his footsteps might lead him, had hurried into the midst of the throng before he could command himself. It had not as yet become necessary for this professor of Calvinism to throw off the mask entirely, and either to disavow his principles, or brave out his departure from them amidst a course of hopeless profligacy. Some suspicions had, indeed, transpired as to his sincerity, but they were generally regarded as the offspring of the unprejudiced vulgar, and his apostacy was carefully concealed by the members of his own church. Something was still due to consistency, more perhaps to hypocrisy, and James had the satisfaction, on recovering himself, to observe, that his violence had not been noticed.

"Mr. Albert Moonshine, I presume," said he.

"Yes," was the squire's answer.

"Going home, Sir?" continued Mr. Priminheere.

"Yes——"

"But *you* ar'nt, Sir," exclaimed Carl Jones.

"No—no—good friend," answered James, in a patronising tone of compassion for the blacksmith's condition, "I am on my way to see a sick brother."

"You'll be late, Sir," resumed Jones, drily.

"It *is* late," calmly replied Mr. Priminheere. "Mr. Moonshine," went on the Calvinist, "we are fellow-sufferers."

"Yes, Sir," said Albert; and after a pause somewhat considerble, "How, pray Sir?"

"We were rivals, Sir, for the hand of Miss Jane Hamilton, but are now, I trust, friends, for another has the victory. Mortimer——"

"Mortimer! Mortimer!" reiterated Albert, again awakened to painful ecstacy; "where is my mother?

"What can your mother have to do with Mortimer, my dear Sir?" said Priminheere.

The reader knows, however, the power which Mrs. Moonshine had acquired on some occasions over her son.

"My mother is no friend to the Mortimers, Sir, I assure you," said Albert, with an air of simplicity which confounded the Calvinist.

"And so it ends, easily enough!" observed the latter with indifference.

"No, we don't give it up, we don't despair, Sir," replied Albert with equal apathy.

"Why don't you fight him at once, Master Albert," cried Jones, "what say you, Sir?" addressing himself to Priminheere.

"Our religion forbids us to shed blood," said the Calvinist, in a tone which plainly rebuked the blacksmith for his intrusion.

"I should like to know what religion you are of? muttered Carl, staggering back a few paces.

"I will fight," exclaimed Albert; "I have been considering, I will fight."

"As you please; only recollect, young gentleman," cried Priminheere with eagerness, "that I have no hand in this matter; I wash my hands of this proceeding."

"Bravo, master Albert; courage, huzza! gentlemen the Squire's determined to fight," cried Carl; "and I do think," he added in an under tone, "that that sly Puritan there has had somewhat to do with it."

"But who is to carry the message?" inquired the man of office.

"Oh! I'll do that with all the pleasure in the world," replied Jones.

"You!" returned Moonshine, his senses appearing to return in all their fulness: "why Carl,"—the Squire's hand was seen to tremble a little—"what next?"

"That will never do," said Priminheere.

"Holloa, Sir," rejoined Carl, "I thought as you warn't to interfere in this business. You were washing of your hands just now, you know."

"Who made you a ruler?" said Priminheere "a man in your trade had far better mind his business and stay at home, than wander about in this way, giving challenges and encouraging drunkenness."

"I'll tell thee what now," returned the blacksmith, "there is'nt one of thy tribe, as don't preach in public against the same things as they do amongst themselves a'terwards."

"You shall be handed over to lawyer Mummins tomorrow morning, I promise you," said the other.

"Lawyer Mummins, lawyer Mummins be——; but I won't swear, I won't be so bad as thou art,—let's toss the Puritan in a blanket," said Carl.

"Ah! Master Albert, Master Albert, where art thou going to?" continued the blacksmith, observing that Mr. Moonshine was silently stealing from the scene of action. "You'll not get off the fight so easy."

But Albert had contrived to shuffle on so as to elude his vociferous companions, although James Priminheere, who was more sober and collected, soon overtook him. Of the nature of their conversation we are not informed, but it is certain that nothing passed to avert the threatened duel, as will be found in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III.

A COUNTRY DUEL.

"*Sir Toby.*—Marry, he had better bethought him of his quarrel.
"*Viol.*—Pray God, defend me! a little thing would make me tell them how much I lack of a man."

Twelfth Night.

"MASTER ALBERT, Master Albert, whither so fast?" It was the rude rough voice of Carl Jones, who descried Mr. Moonshine pacing along his paddock with hurried steps, early on the second morning after the conversation just related.

"One, two, three, four,—twelve, twelve good strides, however," exclaimed Albert, not heeding the blacksmith.

"One, two, three—twelve! holloa, Master Albert," resumed Carl, "You ma'nt be crazy, Sir, on such a morning as this."

"Then ram the bullet well down, and present," continued Albert musing; "but no aim,—no, no, good; then drop the handkerchief and fire! Oh! what is it you, you cowardly knave?" perceiving Jones.

"Me, indeed! yes, and I had like to have been knocked backwards with your 'fire,'" said the other.

"Sharp work, Carl," observed the Squire; "Now I'll show you how the matter will be settled to-day; do you go and stand opposite, there, twelve paces, a little nearer. Now I'll load my pistols."

"Excuse me, Master Albert, if you please," cried Jones lustily: "Mercy on us, I must be going about my work."

"Coward and slave, Carl," returned Albert, "go into the kitchen and ask for a drop of ale to comfort thy frightened spirit."

"No coward and slave, Master Albert, but as for a drop of your good ale now, why to be sure its full early in the morning, but then there's none like unto it in all the country round. I'll soon come back to you again, and thank ye.—Never saw the Squire so brave before," said Jones to himself, as he moved towards the hospitable portal.

"Albert, my love, my little mignon, my dear, what are you doing in the paddock this damp morning?" said a female voice from a window in the adjoining house. "I am quite frightened, I declare, its so unusual for him to get up so early," added Mrs. Moonshine to her companion.

"It is very alarming indeed, Ma'am," replied the other, "and see how he strides about, and takes no notice of us at all."

"Do you, Buzzy, go to him, and tell him how concerned we are, and beg of him to come in," said Mrs. Moonshine.

"La, sure, Ma'am, and the grass is so wet, that I shall certainly bring on my lumbago, and all the series of catastrophes which we read of last night in Lonallan."

"Buzzy, stuff, I say," returned the lady, "lumbago

for merely crossing the grass! what do you think I had you for?"

"Really, Ma'am," said the companion, "its very hard; but see here is Tom, let Tom go,—do you go, Tom, to your master, and tell him with mamma's love, that she wants to speak with him."

"Albert, my darling," said Mrs. Moonshine to her son, who speedily obeyed the summons; "what are you engaged upon this morning? How very strange that you should be up two hours earlier, I positively declare, than I ever knew you?"

"Why, as to that, mother," replied Albert, carelessly, "I've had something to do in the paddock this morning, and what that is I won't tell."

"Oh, fie! Mr. Albert," said the companion, "to keep such secrets."

"Let him alone! let my boy alone, Buzzy; I dare say he has good reasons for it," returned Mrs. Moonshine. "What was it, my dear?" continued she, approaching her son with a conciliating air.

"Don't know, mother," replied the youth briskly, to his disappointed parent. And he was abruptly quitting the room, when the servant announced that a gentlemen was waiting for Mr. Moonshine in a neighbouring apartment.

"Tell him, I'll come—come directly," said Albert, but with an air which convinced his mother that his mind was not composed.

"There's something wrong, Buzzy," observed Mrs. Moonshine, very significantly. "I must find it out," she added, as Albert suddenly left them to attend his appointment. "Buzzy, do you go and listen at the door, quite gently! you must not be found out for the world —no, not for all the world!" she repeated with earnestness, lifting up her hands impressively.

"But, gracious! Ma'am, I can't do such a thing, upon any account! I never listened at a door in my life!" exclaimed the affrighted lady to whom this order had been issued.

"Buzzy, you must. I never suspected him before of a secret. You shall—nay, now, dear, good Buzzy, do go, and make haste; consider, its for all our advantage! Come,—"and Mrs. Moonshine gently led the way to the

room where the conversation was going on, as she supposed. Meanwhile, Albert and Captain O'Donogan had met in the adjoining chamber, and from thence had immediately adjourned to the garden, at the particular request of the latter. The Captain had been very slightly known to Mr. Moonshine, but, on hearing of the circumstance, he had volunteered his services as second. Considering the tranquillity of the times with regard to duelling, he might be called as singular a character as his principal, for he was a great amateur of affairs of honour, and was accustomed to enumerate them among his "sports of the field." Indeed, he was almost the last professed representative of these chivalries, for the force of judicial menaces, and an imagined increase of intellect in juries, are said to have intimidated and dispersed all classes of combatants, together with their abettors. However this be, Captain O'Donogan, in conformity with the approved usage upon such emergencies, left his bed at early morn with unusual cheerfulness, and in spite of some difficulties which his ignorance of the route occasioned, was at the house of his new friend punctually (bating half a minute) to his arrangement.

"And now," whispered he to the antagonist of Mortimer, "are you ready? Has your servant got the——." A sagacious and confidential nod communicated all that could be said upon the subject.

"Oh! they are within, in doors, Captain; I will fetch them presently, when I go to wish my mother good-b'ye."

"Wish his mother a good-b'ye! Powers! Oh, dear! Wish his mother——"

"I'll go now, if you will give me leave, Captain," said Albert.

"I ought to have had them yesterday night, Sir, according to strict rules; but see, now, five minutes after eight; come, we shall be late on the field."

"There's plenty of time," returned the young man, "and pray walk in, and take a glass of wine, Captain, while I make one or two little arrangements, and give a few directions to my people."

"Arrangements and directions! and—boo! Sir, I'll not walk in and drink a glass of wine with you! We

shall be beyond our time, which is an occurrence, permit me to say, Sir, which never happened to me since the days of my mother's grandfather."

"Wait, then, if you please, Captain O'Donogy—."

"Captain O'Donogan, Sir, if you please! Why, sure, if the lad's arm doesn't shake. Come, Sir, I'll tell you, I'll do that for you I wouldn't do for my own brother, if I had one, (they've been all killed, poor souls! in particular ways,) I'll lend you my own—see here—choice ones; I always travel with them about with me."

"Why, Captain!" said Albert, his native indifference making a struggle to get uppermost.

"Look you, Sir," returned the Captain, hurrying away his charge from the garden, from whence they reached the road through a private gate. "Look you, the other second is not always precisely the man he ought to be, or perhaps he is fond of a little sport himself, and in either case, the matter can be easily settled, if we have the weapons by us."

"Oh, surely!" cried Albert, with as much unconcern as he could muster. "Pray, Captain, if I may venture to ask, how many, fairly speaking—I merely put the question out of curiosity—how many escape, that is to say, have escaped, out of all the duels you have known?"

"Faith, an odd question," returned the Irishman, scanning the countenance of the inquirer with much disrespect. "I have had to do with a great many of these little affairs, and, on the whole, for your satisfaction I may say, that I have not known many men killed."

"An accident now and then only, Captain?" said Albert, whose manner but ill-corresponded with the inflexible immovableness of O'Donogan.

"My poor friend, Titus O'Shaugnessy, descended from the ancient Irish," observed the Captain, "fell at my feet, one day, in a business of this sort, with a poltroon of a civilian who could scarcely be brought into the field. The rascal! I silenced him, myself, afterwards."

"You silenced him! how, Sir, for God's sake?" asked Albert with increasing emotion.

"Poor Titus!" replied the officer, brushing away a tear which had begun its march towards his cheek; "Oh yes! why, Sir, how? I made the fellow turn out

the next day, and shot him at the first exchange on the instant."

"Merciful God!" exclaimed Albert, thoroughly aroused and sobered; "your life has been, indeed, a quarrelsome one."

"Quarrelsome, Sir, did you say," interrupted the other hastily; "you are inexperienced, and I pass it over; no gentleman can be quarrelsome; its a mortal affront, let me tell you, Sir, even to be thought to imagine such a thing. No," continued the officer, "mine has not been a quarrelsome life, but it has been sometimes a painful one; and now you have put me upon it, I must tell you, that I was once obliged to touch another very dear friend of mine, but he would have it—poor Dennis Boragan!"

"Your own friend, Sir! you surely didn't kill him?"

"Dennis and I had a difference about the quality of a potatoe," resumed the Captain, "and something passed, I forget exactly what, but it was thought that our honours were called in question; I had a misgiving or two after the accident, but of course our seconds managed the thing accurately."

"And your friend fell, Sir?" inquired Albert with eagerness.

"Why now—gently—I candidly tell you, I did not intend to kill him—I only meant to wing him. I have never been able to account for it to this day. I have always valued myself upon touching any part of the human body I pleased, and my friend was too gallant a man to die of fright."

"Then you really did kill him," repeated Albert.

"Oh, yes—sure—when they went to him, he was dead enough, sure—God bless him! but the surgeons never extracted the ball—its all a mystery—poor Dennis!"

"Your paces, though, Captain Donogan——"

"Captain O'Donogan, Sir, at your service."

"I was saying," returned Albert, still endeavouring to rally, "that your paces were shorter than our's in this country, Captain O'Donogan."

"You are somewhat longer here than with us, as I have heard," said the Captain; "but, for my part, I always measure Irish paces, unless particularly requested."

"There would be no harm in accommodating us according to the custom of our own country to-day, would there, Captain?"

"There would be no harm, that is to say, no moral harm in it, Sir; but then, you know, both sides must consent, and if Mr. Mortimer's second should prefer the short step, why, there would be a little delicacy, you see, Sir, in proposing a distinction."

From whatever cause it might have been, the name of Mortimer failed to excite its usual sympathies in Albert's mind, and he reverted instantly to the question of the paces.

"So, Captain," he added, with anxiety, marching up and down, "One—two—three—twelve——."

"One—two—three—twelve! Powers!" exclaimed the Irishman, "you might as well measure by the leg of Saint Patrick. Here, look, one—two—three."

"Then no living man can escape," cried Albert in a hurry.

"As I am a living Irishman, said Captain O'Donogan; "as I am my own mother's dear son, I have got to do at my blessed time of life with a nature's own-born coward; and," looking at his watch, "by the pistol of my poor Titus, it's hard upon nine, and we shall be behind-hand half an hour. Oh! shame upon me for undertaking such a civility for a stranger!"

"I am going on, Sir," said Albert.

"Going on; when was I ever too late before in all my whole life?"

These fresh words of consolation were not lost upon Albert, whose courage, however sufficient at starting to have encountered a dangerous adversary, indeed, could not be heightened by the melancholy stories of Captain O'Donogan.

The principal and second were now fast advancing on the scene of action, when they perceived a group of several persons assembled. Amongst these was Carl Jones the blacksmith, who no sooner saw Albert and the Captain, than, warmed with the generous ale he had been drinking, he ran forward, and clapped the former familiarly on the shoulder. "Cheer up, Master Albert," cried he, "it will soon be over—they've been waiting here this half-hour."

"There now, botheration—a quarter after nine—" exclaimed the Irishman.

"Cheer up, my hearty," reiterated Jones, giving the Captain a slap on the back, which was returned by the latter with such interest as to leave him sprawling along the common upon which they had just entered,—"What, in the name of the Most High, have we got here? What, do you bring up a village rabble to back you, Sir? What am I to think?" roared O'Donogan, with immense violence.

A loud congratulation on the appearance of Albert amongst about a dozen persons who had assembled, increased the Captain's anger and confusion.

"What am I to think of all this Sir?" inquired he, with evident marks of impatience. "Are we going to settle this matter in the ungentlemanly manner they do the thing at Boulogne, with a whole retinue of vagabonds to overlook us. For heaven's sake, Sir, dismiss your cortége."

Albert remained silent.

"Colonel Ball—Sir—your most obedient servant."

Captain O'Donogan was now addressing himself to Mr. Mortimer's second, who approached: "We have been detained by—by an unfortunate accident, a mistake, that is to say, of the hour."

"That is unimportant now," returned the Colonel; "your friend is on the ground, of course."

"Yes—Colonel—he is here," replied the Captain, reluctant to acknowledge his associate.

"I presume, Captain O'Donogan, that the gentleman is yonder," observed the Colonel, looking towards a well-dressed man at some distance from them.

"No, no—but he is very near. As soon as we have arranged preliminaries, Mr. Mortimer shall be introduced to him soon enough," replied the Irishman, nettled at the unpromising appearance of the real combatant, who stood alone within sight.

The two officers were now actively engaged in measuring the ground, when Albert suddenly interfered, and renewed his request that the space might not be computed according to the Irish custom.

"Now, there, now," exclaimed the Captain in tor-

ments; "the gentleman is very young in the world, very young indeed; I trust you'll look it over, Colonel."

The ferocious look of his second had been quite available to convince Albert that he had been guilty of a prodigious error, and he instinctively shrank back aghast, though sadly alive to the horrors of the scene.

"It is very unusual for the principal to interrupt," returned Colonel Ball, handing his snuff-box to O'Donogan with much politeness, "but you have been sufficiently explicit. I rather pity the youth."

"Pity is a comical term, Colonel," said the other officer, rather quickly.

"It was not used in an offensive sense, Sir, I assure you," replied the Colonel with a bow which reconciled the difference immediately.

Every arrangement had now been completed, the distance definitively settled, the instruments of warfare inspected, and loaded with real leaden bullets, the ceremonies of introduction had been gone through, and both sides were awaiting that awful and certain signal which precedes the satisfaction of injured honour, when Captain O'Donogan perceived the head of his protegé calmly reposing on his breast. Stung by this fresh exhibition of cowardice, as the Irish gentleman considered it, he shook the young man with impatience, whispering to him at the same time the most spirit-stirring remarks he could devise. Mr. Mortimer and his second, on the other hand, appeared scarcely to notice this delay but while they stood prepared for action, Albert, as if inspired by a sudden impulse, started from his reverie, snatched the ready weapon from the hands of O'Donogan, and discharged it in an instant in the direction of Mortimer.

"Without the word of command, by all the Powers!" ejaculated the Captain, fervently.

"You shall not fire, Sir," exclaimed Colonel Ball to his principal, who was unhurt: "this is downright murder." And then advancing forward, he asked at the hands of the Captain an explanation of the strange proceeding.

"Faith, and I can't tell, I'm downright botherated about it myself, to tell you the real truth," was the answer.

"But, Captain O'Donogan," returned the Colonel, "you very well know, that some explanation is due from you upon this occasion; I shall not allow my friend to renew the affair, and I must say, that it is not in the least better than absolute murder."

"Murder!" replied the other, "that can hardly be, when there's nobody murdered."

"No, Captain; but still you had better learn from the gentleman the reason of his behaviour; for if a sufficient answer is not returned, I must remove Mr. Mortimer from the field."

"Remove Mr. Mortimer from the field! Oh dear!" replied O'Donogan, observing at the same time that Albert had relapsed into a state of entire insensibility, and that he was supported by some of the spectators. "You and I, Colonel, could settle it ourselves, if it was agreeable."

"I am sure, Captain," said Colonel Ball, "that, although it does not seem to be quite regular, I shall have no objection, though your acquaintance there doesn't seem to be in a condition to assist you. I never shrink from action, Captain."

"No acquaintance or friend of Captain O'Donogan's," exclaimed the Irish officer, looking on the crestfallen 'squire with a contempt which can neither be uttered nor written.

And now the Colonel and Captain, bent on settling the dispute in their own way, had infallibly endeavoured to have shed each other's blood, but for two events which occurred almost contemporaneously. It will be recollected, that Mrs. Moonshine had sent her friend Buzzy to watch the door whence her son had gone forth a minute or two before the operation of listening had commenced. The confidant proceeded to execute her orders, and the lady herself remained behind, near enough to guard her confederate, and catch any loose particulars which might happen to drop if the talk became louder than usual. Time, however, passed on, and silence supervened; that killing, disappointing silence which may be felt; and Miss Buzzy, who thought herself both morally and physically degraded by her stooping employment, proposed that the room should be entered. The arrangement being acceded to, and

the emptiness of the apartments speedily disclosed, Mrs. Moonshine lost no time in inquiring the name of the stranger who had been announced. But no sooner had she received intelligence from a lad who worked on her premises (for the Captain had withheld his name from the house servants) that an officer named O'Donogan had been seen to come towards Moonshine Court on that morning, than the dreadful reality burst at once upon her mind, and the consternation it produced was immense. Not a moment was lost in sending for the constable, who was to find out the scene of action if he could; but on inquiry it was discovered, that the civil authority himself had gone to "see the fight," and Mrs. Moonshine was in despair. But the place of combat had been discovered by these means, and another guardian of the peace having been procured from an adjoining hamlet, a vast number of persons, headed by the civil power, set forth to prevent, if possible, the intended transgression. Nor could the anxious mother remain at home, she was too conscious of her exertions in exciting her son against Mortimer, from the first, to mistake his early exploit. The expression of "seeing the fight," made the conclusion irrevocable, and urged to the highest her already agitated spirits.

This errand of peace, however, had been partially anticipated. For Carl Jones and his friends perceiving the fresh marks of hostility which indeed were visible enough in the two seconds, came forward and remonstrated heartily against their intentions. It was even proposed to disarm them, but no adventurer was found hardy enough to accomplish this latter project. The bluff manners of the blacksmith, nevertheless, could not be suppressed. "As far as a fight or so," said he, "between people as really have had a quarrel together, why, really, (although I'm no friend to these here popguns neither,) but as I said, really one wouldn't go to hinder it, maybe. They've had a dispute, whatever it be, and, why let them settle it. But here you've two gentlemen here who were talking and smiling together just now, all of a sudden ready to cut each other's throats without any reason, or any thing! It ma'nt be."

Much as this eloquent harangue, accompanied as it was with corresponding gestures, astonished the Colo-

nel and Captain O'Donogan, they were no less annoyed and surprised by the rapid and unceremonious advance of the police, or rather of the constable with his posse.

Not to dwell upon events which the reader must of course anticipate; the duel was absolutely put and end to (at least for that day). Master Albert was surrendered to his disconsolate parent, who hurried him from the field, Carl Jones and some of his choice comrades adjourned to the village alehouse to spread the news, and Roger Mortimer retired to his house, not quite in good humour with himself for the part he had taken, and still less satisfied with his antagonist, whose reputation for valour suffered an irretrievable disgrace amongst the villagers after the awkward event of that morning.

We may remember, that in the early part of the transaction just related, a well-dressed man had been pointed out by Colonel Ball, as the intended opponent of his friend. This was James Priminheere. Such had been the distraction of his mind, that he himself scarcely knew the real impulse which had urged him to the field. He had passed a night of agitation, torn by contending fits of remorse and fury, till at length the light of morning dawned upon his sleepless pillow; but curiosity, which urged on the heedless crowd, found no place in the breast of the Calvinist; he remained awhile almost motionless on the field, anxious to advance and crush the quarrel, but withheld by deeper feelings of revenge. The scene passed rapidly away while he hesitated, and he retired with the bitter reflection, that if Mortimer's life were no longer in jeopardy, he had not been instrumental in hindering the threatened accident. But conscience-awakened as he thus was, resentment for the loss of his suit soon revived, together with the reflection that his estate needed the aid of Jane Hamilton's fortune, so that he soon determined on the employment of new measures for the attainment of his wishes. How these fresh designs were accomplished, will be related in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

STRATAGEMS.

"*Visiter.*—Is Mr. Johnson at home?

"*Servant.*—No, Sir.

"*Visiter.*—Very well. I had something of importance to tell him, but its of no consequence.

"*Servant.*—Oh! Sir, will you please to wait a little, I believe master is at home." *Original Dialogues.*

It was on a gay green morning in the month of April, that a numerous band of children were seen marching two and two towards Alderbury Park house. They seemed cheerful as the day which beamed upon them in its splendour, and healthy as the face of Nature which was budding around them. Their dress, neat but unadorned, plainly betokened that the hand of benevolence had clothed them. The closely shorn hair, imprisoned as it were by a bonnet as trimly fitted, and fringed by the plain snow-white cap—the simple tucker and flounceless frock—the tall stout shoe, whence sandal never rose—all bore testimony to the care of some benefactress, on whose person one might almost shudder to behold an ornament.

This was Mrs. Hamilton's birth-day, and she had determined on regailing her school with a grand treat of cake and wine after the ceremony of morning prayers. A large party of her friends were staying at the mansion, amongst them one or two highly orthodox clergymen, and these in particular anticipated no small delight from the opportunity of asking a few questions of the children, with a view of ascertaining the extent of their improvement. These expectations were much heightened by the approach of a group of boys who had long been under the patronage of the Rector. This party could not boast the neat appearance and precise regularity of Mrs. Hamilton's school. In spite of no ordinary scolding by the dame, sundry cainings by the master, and grave admonitions by Dr. Dundrosy himself, it was impossible to maintain a due degree of order amongst this band of youths. One might see a surly shuffling gait, a reckless ill-tempered brow, a slovenly carelessness, mingled with such signs of dissatisfaction as imparted a general air of discredit to these pupils of

the unfortunate Rector. Out of respect, however, for the clergyman of her parish, possibly too from a keen sense of the contrast between her school and his, Mrs. Hamilton invited the village boys to share the festivity of the day.

The gouty Rector himself had determined to tax his legs to the utmost on that morning, if not for the purpose of introducing his scholars, at least with the fondest hope of an invitation to dine at Alderbury Park in the evening. Dr. Dundrosy had been the incumbent of the living for fifty years, and he had been heard to declare on that very morning, that he never saw the children turn out in such good condition before. "My predecessor," he ejaculated, "never thought of such a sight as this."

The hostess of Alderbury soon appeared to welcome her guests, but the customary greetings had scarcely subsided, when symptoms of insurrection began to manifest themselves amongst the boys, and it was with great difficulty that the Doctor could manage, by alternate threats and coaxings, to appease them. He was relieved, however, from his embarrassment by Mrs. Hamilton, who hastened to compliment her fellow-labourer in the duties of education.

"Dr. Dundrosy," said the lady, "I am quite delighted to see you with us this morning; every one is admiring your thriving group. And don't you think that the girls are very neat? I am sure that you will give them a good character for their attendance at church."

"Very regular, Madam; a very nice school, indeed, and very orthodox."

"They can never do very wrong, Doctor Dundrosy, if they adhere to doctrines inculcated from our pulpits," said Mrs. Hamilton.

"Right, Madam, the good old Christian principles," returned the Doctor. "My two immediate predecessors, Madam," continued Dundrosy, sighing over the sacred recollections of Mr. Dolittle and Dr. Venezun, "were incumbents here for nearly half a century each."

"And pray—may I ask—Dr. Dundrosy," said the Honourable Mr. Toughness, a dashing youth of the modern blood, "what do you do with these children when they have done school? how do you employ them?"

"Certainly," replied the Minister, "by all means; I shall be happy to inform you. Mrs. Hamilton, who is a pattern of diligence and zeal in the neighbourhood, will be kind enough first to inform us of the occupations of her pupils."

"Why should I take precedence of my Rector?" exclaimed the lady, not highly pleased at the reference.

"Because," returned the Doctor, "the ladies always have the prfority." The delight of having relieved himself by so elegant a speech so elevated Dr. Dundrosy, that he was enabled to survey the interfering stripling with a scrutiny accompanied by some degree of dignity.

"Well, since I am called upon," said Mrs. Hamilton with an air of ceremony, "I have no objection to tell; they go to work, Sir, after school."

"And the boys too, Doctor, I suppose?" observed Mr. Toughness, as inflexible as before. "Let me ask a question of the children,—may I?" continued the honourable guest with a tone of awful simplicity.

The Rector rather awkwardly signified his consent.

"Do you like school, my little friend?" asked Mr. Toughness of the lad who stood nearest to him.

"Not over much, Sir," was the unpolished, though not uncivil reply.

"You like your master, the reverend Rector, don't you my boy?" said the youth to another of the band.

"Oh yes, Sir," returned the boy archly, as if conscious of the immediate presence of his master.

"That's a good lad," said Dundrosy, quite overjoyed.

"Come, attend to me, boy," resumed the Doctor, addressing himself to a third. "What are you?"

"A radical, Sir."

"A what?" the Doctor intonated with a struggle, which might betoken either ignorance or dismay.

"I am a radical, Sir, and so is my father; and we're all radicals, Sir, all the family, and always was."

"What's your name, you——?" Doctor Dundrosy was choked by his indignant feelings. "He shall be turned out of the school instantly before all the boys, as a disgrace to my school," roared out the Rector, as soon as he had recovered a little.

"Stay, but let us hear a moment," interrupted Mr. Toughness. "What is a radical, my boy?"

"Don't talk to him, Sir," said Dundrosy; "don't speak to a radical; let him go to his family, a worthless set!"

"Let me have an answer to my question," observed Mr. Toughness, with much good humour. "What is a radical, my lad!"

"A radical, Sir!" replied the youth, quite softened by the kind manner of his examiner, "Why, father and all of us don't like to pay the tithes and taxes."

"There it is—tithes and taxes; all the common fellows have got this tale now," observed the Rector.

"You see the poor fellow doesn't really know now what a radical is; don't turn him out, Doctor," said the patrician guest.

"Not turn him out?" retorted Dundrosy, with a look of full importance and decision; "he shall strip off his coat this instant," continued the enraged parson, "and go back to his nest of revolutionary firebrands! —Out of my sight!" continued he, regarding the ill-fated boy with furious displeasure.

"Let the rascal go home to his radical friends," cried the Rector again, beckoning a spare, pensive young man, who acted as a kind of usher or understrapper.

The mandate was obeyed, and the radical was soon observed moving silently homewards without the badge of charity, and muttering some inscrutable words, which one may be sure savoured very little of kindness towards rectors and schools. Indeed, the looks of Mrs. Hamilton and all the company denoted plainly enough their opinion, that the Doctor had been rather hasty. No one, however, spoke upon the subject except Mr. Toughness, who calmly observed, "That radical boy will now become a radical man."

"And now, Doctor Dundrosy," said Mrs. Hamilton, "you'll walk in and take some refreshment; the treat for the boys and girls will soon be ready."

"No, Madam, you are very kind," returned the Doctor, "I must return home, I thank you.—How shabby, now, not to ask me to dinner! That's the way with this sort of proud gentry." These latter words were of course said in silent bitterness.

"Dear Doctor, I had just forgotten," said Mrs. Hamilton at this critical moment, "you'll be of our party to-night at Alderbury, at seven, if you please?"

As the Whig Cabinet, of the winter of 1830, brightened up at the hearing of the Duke of Wellington's antipathy to reform; as the magistrates, gentry, and farmers, chuckled at the thoughts of seizing the incendiary Swing; in a word, as any plain man about to pass his November night in loneliness, cheers up on being suddenly translated to a feast; so did Dr. Dundrosy rear his head at this unhoped for announcement. He did not know that he had any engagement at home; he was sure he had not; he should, consequently, wait on Mrs. Hamilton with the greatest pleasure.

That lady was now summoned by a servant, who informed her that a gentleman was desirous of speaking to her on business. It was Mrs. Hamilton's custom to attend regularly and promptly to requests of this sort; and she, therefore, hastened to her appointment, taking care to constitute her daughter commander-in chief during her absence.

We must follow her to the room where she was to meet the person who had summoned her from her friends. But the first emotion which she felt was one of pain and displeasure, when she beheld Mr. Priminheere, her daughter's rejected suitor, before her.

"I called on you, Madam," said the gentleman just mentioned, "on, I confess, rather a delicate subject. My duty urges me to this visit, although, under other circumstances, I allow you would have a right to call it most improper after what has passed."

The gravity of Mrs. Hamilton did not allow her visiter to disembarrass himself so easily as he expected after his laboured preliminary. After a short, dreadful silence, he ventured to proceed—

"I believe—indeed, Madam, it is well known in the country, that your daughter is about to be united to Mr. Roger Mortimer."

"Which daughter, Sir? for I have three," asked the lady of her hesitating companion.

"Miss Jane, Madam," returned Priminheere, the mortification of his defeat coming fully into his remembrance.

"Well, Sir, and if that be so, as you have informed me, that all the country is acquainted with it—what then?"

"Why—you must pardon me, Madam," answered the other, somewhat more piqued than disconcerted, "but I really had an object in my visit this morning, which I can hardly undertake to fulfil, if I am unable to learn from you the certainty of this union."

"You are aware, Sir, that although my servant has let you in to-day," replied the lady, "you are not authorized to overstep the bounds of politeness. Your question is one which, whether I ought to answer it, I leave to your consideration." And so saying, she prepared to rise, having, as she concluded, irretrievably confounded her visiter.

But Mr. Priminheere was not so easily to be abashed; he had recovered his confidence, if, indeed, it had ever given way, and he was not so soon to be thwarted in a design which he had carefully formed. He rose also, and passing towards the door, carelessly intimated, that if the state of her intended son-in-law's fortune was immaterial to Mrs. Hamilton, it was certainly impertinent in a stranger to have ventured any observations on that subject.

"Inquiries have been made as to Mr. Mortimer's concerns, and they have appeared satisfactory," said Mrs. Hamilton, with an assidious gaze. "You do not know any thing to the contrary, do you, Sir?"

"If I did, Madam," was the answer, "it can be neither of service nor of moment, if the fact of the intended union be not certain. I have disturbed you from your company, Madam. I beg pardon—I take my leave."

Pride struggled against an inveterate curiosity in the mind of the lady, but the calm indifference of Priminheere had, in turn, startled her. Something wrong might have happened, and the difficulty now was to extort the news from a person she could not but dislike, without compromising her dignity. It was in vain to attempt this entirely, and she resolved, in an instant, to soften the dissenter.

"Perhaps I may have gone a little too far, and treated you somewhat abruptly. You cannot but remember former events, and I had reason to apprehend," said

Mrs. Hamilton, "a recurrence to topics which must have proved as painful to you as to myself. I see that the case is different, and I frankly tell you, that arrangements have been entered into for a speedy union between my daughter Jane and Mr. Mortimer."

The mistress of Alderbury coloured deeply in making this disclosure; but its effect was immediate in arresting the departure of the visiter.

"Since that is so, then," said Mr. Priminheere, "and I disclaim every feeling of malice, every unkind thought and jealous principle, I feel bound to say that it is quite desirable that your solicitor should investigate Mr. Mortimer's affairs rather more closely than you have done hitherto."

"Is it possible?" observed Mrs. Hamilton, "Our attorney, Mr. Skindeep, has been actively engaged in carrying on an investigation as decently as these affairs will allow. You know that the late Mr. Mortimer was highly respected in the country?"

"Oh yes," was the reply, accompained by a grin of disbelieving sarcasm: "but I need not, I think, remind a lady of the strong sense which you appear to possess, that the more respectable we seem to be, the more occasion there is for a strict inquiry where matters of importance are at stake."

"You know something, Sir," returned the lady, "which I should feel obliged if you will communicate."

"Under a promise of strict secrecy, Madam."

"Decidely, Sir, the most faithful secrecy."

"Then, Madam, a mortgage-deed lies at the office of Messrs. Dell and Head, which is so far important as it comprises nearly all the estates at present attributed to your intended relation. They are not large, you are aware, at the most. The course to be pursued," added he after a deep pause, "would be for Mr. Skindeep to call at the office of these gentlemen, and ascertain the fact, and also that the deed remains uncancelled, which is so. You can then consult Mr. Mortimer, or take any other step you may think fit."

"No," returned Mrs. Hamilton, roused by the information she had received, "if this story be correct, and I have no reason to doubt it," she bowed politely as she spoke this, "neither I nor my daughter, rely on

it, will see this person again. To be sure not, if, as you say too, this deed remains uncancelled."

"You would hear what the young gentleman has to say, I presume, out of pure Christian compassion?" insinuated the other.

"No," replied the lady; "the fact will speak too strongly after his assurances, and the manner which he has assumed of the utmost openness. I shall not dare to see him after such a discovery. We must ever feel eminently indebted to you, Sir, for this rather dangerous service which you have rendered us."

"Oh! as to that, nothing at all; not in the least."

"It was necessary," said he to himself at this moment, "that I should know whether this youth would be able to plead his own cause or not."

"I would not be intrusive, Madam," he resumed, "but—" he hesitated, "but you will not lose a very valuable acquaintance. It is impossible to deny that your elegant daughter's hand, her accomplishments and fortune, are infinitely more than a match for Mr. Mortimer's slender inheritance."

"It certainly would be clear to every one that the advantage lay on our side," replied Mrs. Hamilton.

"And now let me entreat you, Madam, to remember your promise of silence, for our's is a profession of peace; and although we never enter into affairs of honour, it is painful to be called upon."

"Certainly it is, and you may depend on my honour in this respect," said Mrs. Hamilton.

"I merely hinted this before I left you," said Priminheere, "because the young gentleman was engaged in a duel only yesterday, and I need hardly say that I have a great aversion to such practices."

"Indeed, Sir," returned the lady; "we heard a rumour of such a thing, and have thought it strange that Mr. Mortimer has not been here yet; but we know that he is safe and well."

"Yes, there was no accident," said Priminheere. "I don't know that I should have mentioned the circumstance, but for the reason which you, Madam, have approved of."

The interview here broke off, with many expressions of courteousness on both sides. Mrs. Hamilton return-

ed to her company much disturbed, and incensed, not merely at the news which she had heard, but equally so at the silence of her son-in-law, as she still esteemed Mr. Mortimer. Mr. Priminheere, on his part, returned to his house, very little profited by the part which he had undertaken, for he found his conscience considerably more troublesome than he could have wished,—more so, indeed, than it had been for some months past. He had, certainly, contrived to elicit expressions of good will from Mrs. Hamilton, which his early reception would hardly have warranted him in expecting, and his hopes of Jane Hamilton consequently revived in some measure; but the precepts of his religion, which he vainly strove to forget, embittered all these flattering hopes, and made him ten times more wretched than the man he was endeavouring to injure.

The union between the young couple above alluded to was, indeed, much nearer than Mr. Priminheere imagined. The lady, not averse to the suit of one so well esteemed as Roger Mortimer, beset too, in common with her sisters, by tenders of regard from numbers who wooed her fortune only, evinced no desire to vex her lover by an arduous and uncertain courtship. If there were an obstacle, it might be said to have arisen on the part of Mrs. Hamilton, who had motherly ambition enough to desire a coronet, or at least a Baronet's blazonry, for her child. But Jane pressed, and Roger Mortimer entreated, so that the rich dame was induced to abandon her reluctance, and the ceremony was drawing nigh.

Now, however, Mrs. Hamilton had some pretence for avoiding a connexion, which her pride of wealth could never cordially sanction, and she instantly directed her attorney to make the search suggested. It is sufficient to say that the mortgage deed spoken of, was found in the office of Dell and Head, uncancelled. It bore upon its face a heavy, a ruinous sum, against the estate of Mortimer; and the attorneys, with whom it had been deposited, felt no trifling surprise at discovering it. It had been mislaid, they said, or neglected for years; but they should now feel it to be their duty to wait upon the heirs of the mortgagee, who was a friend of old Mr. Mortimer, in order that, if they thought fit, it might

be brought into action. How Priminheere had become acquainted with the existence of such a deed, remained a secret.

CHAPTER V.

THE GAMESTER.

"I will stand the hazard of the die."—*Richard III.*

"An uncancelled mortgage deed! my father too! impossible—ridiculous!—hard-hearted lawyers!"

It was the morning after Priminheere's interview with Mrs. Hamilton, when Mortimer uttered this frantic exclamation, as he rushed towards the stable where his favourite horse was kept.

"Poor Captain!" he exclaimed, "thou must take thy master far, far from home, from this desperate misery which has overwhelmed him. Yesterday! how impossible the change!" he continued, shuddering at his own soliloquy.—"Yesterday I had plenty, a home, a mother, sister—a—bride. Now all are worse than nothing—poverty. I dare not think of it.—James," said he to his groom, who was coming to the stable, "put the saddle upon Captain, and tell Robert to get my portmanteau ready for a week's journey; and do you get ready to go with me directly; and if my mother, or sister, should ask for me, let them be told that I am compelled to leave home suddenly, on very urgent business, for a short time."

It is scarcely necessary to acquaint the reader with the reason of Mortimer's agitation. He had repaired on that morning to Alderbury, where he was referred, without much ceremony, to the family solicitor. This gentleman had only one duty to fulfil, and it is but just to say, that he discharged his painful communications with a kindness rarely met with upon such occasions. Still Mortimer shrank from the fatal message, and hastened distractedly to the office in which he was informed the deed lay. After some delay he was admitted to an audience with Mr. Head, who, with much condescension and regret, showed him the parchment which bore such ruin on its pages. Mortimer would have snatched it, to peruse its awful contents, but the law-

yer instinctively restrained the grasp of his visiter, by withdrawing the deed sufficiently out of reach, but yet not so as to hinder him from reading it.

"There are the signatures," exclaimed Mr. Head.

"But why not have demanded your rights before?" inquired the maddened young man.

"And was it not a mercy to you that we did not?" returned Mr. Head, with much coolness. "You know that at one time we were your father's solicitors; that circumstance alone would have made us act with consideration towards you; but, young gentleman, we do not wish to take credit to ourselves for too much generosity; we knew that you were destined for Miss Jane Hamilton, and that you would be enabled to discharge these legal incumbrances upon your estates. That chance has passed away," continued the lawyer with sang-froid, "and, give me leave to say, by your own fault; for it seems you had never acquainted Mrs. Hamilton with this transaction."

"Because I never knew it, Sir," replied Mortimer.

"We are very sorry, we cannot help it," was the courteously expressed, though too significant answer, and Mortimer withdrew with abruptness.

He then instantly determined to quit the country, imagining that no proceedings could be carried on during his absence, and that Mrs. Mortimer and his sister would remain at home unmolested, at least for a sufficient time to allow him the opportunity of retrieving his affairs.

In this state of mind he called for his horse as we have just related, and he lost not a moment in fulfilling his resolves. Mounting the animal which he so much prized, he rode onwards to the next village, where he dismissed his groom, and proceeded towards the coast of Kent, with an expedition which allowed but little time for reflection. From thence he dispatched a letter to his alarmed and disconsolate relatives, and hurrying on board of the packet, soon gained the shores of France.

Leaving him for a short time on his route to Paris, we will return to England, and to the house of James Priminheere.

There needed not much observation to convince the crafty Calvinist of the success of his design. The movements of Mortimer soon became known, not to him only,

but to all the neighbourhood; but Priminheere was determined that a visit to Alderbury, which he now meditated, should be conducted with more secrecy. In spite of his brother's remonstrances, he persevered in his purpose, and obtained not merely an interview with Mrs. Hamilton, (to whom he insinuated the superiority of his place over Byrdwood, the estate of Mortimer,) but gained access also to Miss Jane.

Time now passed on, and no tidings were heard of her former suitor. Proceedings had indeed been commenced against the sad and compassionated inmates of Byrdwood, and the law rites were fast approaching to their consummation; for the earlier stages had been gone through with a mysterious and lulling silence; but the well-known delay incident to that dry science had as yet preserved the relatives of the absent owner from the loss of the ancient property. It was hinted, that Priminheere had not a little aided in furthering the means for recovering the estate to the mortgagee, but of this fact we have no positive intelligence; and it is certain that that gentleman had many enemies in his immediate neighbourhood. The sanctity of his deportment, and the inflexibility of his behaviour, had affronted many who, judging of their own predilections, despaired of his becoming their associate, whilst others entertained the shrewd suspicion, as the reader must by this time, that his course of life by no means agreed with his pretensions.

However this may be, James Priminheere paid little heed to the sarcasms or remarks which were applied to him; and in a few months he had become so frequent a guest at Mrs. Hamilton's, as to render his visits no longer unimportant in the eyes of all professed gossips and newsdealers. Indeed, to say the truth, he had managed so adroitly, as to gain entirely the affections of the mother; and whether from pique at the silence of Mortimer, or a wish to avoid the reproach of country celibacy, her daughter Jane certainly had received, if not encouraged, his fresh advances towards her. Mrs. Hamilton was much softened by a hint which he threw out of his competency to buy up the mortgage of Byrdwood, accompanied by an expression of pity for Mrs. Mortimer, and an intention of consoling her latter years with an allowance. Jane also was struck by these declara-

tions; but the skill which her new lover employed in representing the faithlessness and indifference of Mortimer, had great weight towards the influencing of her decision.

The breath of public rumour had long since outstripped that determination; long before the final troth, had Fame made this lady the affianced spouse of Priminheere; and when at length contradiction would have been idle, and evasion impossible, so strange was the occurrence considered, that report grew upon report, and the marriage-day was expected with a keen curiosity. It was said, that Mrs. Hamilton had turned Calvinist, and that her family were to adopt that same persuasion, only by gentler degrees; and as the worthy rector, Dr. Dundrosy, was heard to observe, that he did not like the business at all, there might be some ground for such a story. Of Priminheere more was intimated by gestures and momentous whispers than by any signal expression. Men preserved an awful silence concerning him, and women shook their heads, while the humbler tenants of the place privately averred, that he had long maintained communion with the worst of mysterious personages. In due season the hour of the nuptials approached, for Jane Hamilton had been prevailed upon to surrender her hand and fortunes to the aspiring Calvinist; but a condition far other than that devised by the public voice had been imposed, and it lay, not upon the bride or her family, but on the bridegroom. What this pledge was may be easily gathered from the interview which took place between Charles Priminheere and his elder brother, shortly before the day of the wedding. James sat pensive and dejected on the sofa when the barrister was announced.

"My brother," said he, "I am glad to see you; I am glad that you are come according to my summons, for I wanted to consult you upon a subject much more serious than any which I have ever confided to you."

"If you mean your marriage with Miss Hamilton, James," replied his brother, "I believe that you may spare me the counsel, for all the world knows that already."

"Charles!" said the elder with freezing solemnity, "did I ever ask a reason at your hands without a cause? You knew as well as I that the match was concluded

but you did not know——" Here the speaker paused as if labouring under some emotion he would fain have hidden.

"James," said the younger Priminheere, "if you have vowed to be this girl's husband, you cannot retract in honour; but if there be a chance, remember that our father——"

"Now, there is my father again. Forbear, Charles, I beseech you; I adjure you, in God's holy name."

"Do not use that name for a purpose so worldly," returned the other.

"Nay, but, Charles, listen. You see me about to be the master of thousands—of this lovely girl—of the seat of the Mortimers, for I shall buy it. Poor things! I shall pension the mother and daughter. I shall be looked up to, honoured, sought after; but still there is a canker, a death-wound, Charles. Help me out of the gaping pit."

He became disturbed as he earnestly breathed out these words, whilst his brother silently waited till he grew more calm.

"You will be able too," said Charles, as soon as his brother had a little recovered, "to be a shining light among our religious friends, if you will but decide, dear brother, to give up some—I speak with respect—of your habits, which are rather too wandering."

But James shuddered as he heard these last words, and his fit of passion rose again rapidly. "It is too late!" he cried. "An irrecoverable pledge has been given. I dare not tell you, though I have sent expressly to you. You will desert, upbraid, and even curse me."

"That is impossible," replied his brother. "When you are composed, I shall pray of you to tell me all."

"Then hear now," said the other, stamping violently with his foot. "I must forswear the religion of my fathers."

Both were silent. James had sunk back upon the sofa, and Charles leaned speechless on the marble.

"That is a heavy sentence indeed," exclaimed the younger Priminheere. "God of his infinite mercy avert such a disaster from our family! 'Tis not for wealth, surely?" added he, gazing earnestly on his distracted companion.

"It was the unkindest stroke of Providence," exclaimed James.

"Nay, blame not Providence, brother," replied Charles. "He has neither compelled you to abandon the profession which you know to be right, nor to marry a woman who would require such a sacrifice."

"It must be so, I fear," was the answer of the elder Priminheere. "Listen," said he after a pause. "I have never ventured to tell you how impoverished this little estate is: ruin stares me in the face, Charles. You, perhaps, may be thriving in your business, gradually ascending the steep summit of the law, and working yourself into a just reputation. I live here upon my own diminishing resources; and, believe me, they must be recruited, or I sink."

"But need they be advanced by wrong, by prostituting your honour and conscience at the shrine of fortune?"

"This is mere moralizing, Charles, a mere tale of our fathers—nobody pays any heed to such superstitions now." But James's voice faltered as he spoke thus in bravado, and his distress did not pass unperceived.

"James," resumed his brother, "let me implore you to give up this alliance; it is no longer a contract of honour, if you are commanded to renounce that which every good and honest man holds most dear."

"And must I then be ruined irretrievably?" asked James with a look of despair.

"Some other course of life may be found for you," said his brother.

"It is in vain, I know, Charles," was James's answer; "I cannot brave the world; I have many enemies even now, owing no doubt to the natural hatred which people in general bear to our religion. I will be emancipated from the threats of poverty and the scorn of a thankless multitude. Besides, the girl is not indifferent to me, although, I confess, Charles, that the money saves me. However, I will think about it, although you have disturbed me on a delicate point, and yet I sent for you. Charles, I am resolute, you may break the matter in the best way you can to the minister and our friends. I decide to ally myself to the Church of England and Miss Jane Hamilton—It must be so."

This conclusive determination broke off the discussion; neither of the brothers renewed the conversation,

and this was the last remonstrance which the elder Priminheere heard or cared to hear on the subject of his marriage and apostacy.

Mortimer pushed on for Paris. It may be readily supposed, that he had never been used to continental travel, his father's aversion to such wanderings having been already mentioned; but he had gained some information concerning foreign capitals, from books in some measure, but chiefly from intercourse with society. He had read of Paris, of its gaieties, its profligacy, its scenes of violence, its great and gallant people. He had formed a judgment of the life and energy of the nation of the French, and his youthful eye already imagined the pageantry of a Parisian festival, and the winning countenances of its soul-cheering groups. The climate too, freed from the cloudful skies which hung upon his own land, promised charms as alluring as a tale of blessed Araby; and, though last in the reckoned list of pleasures, yet first in his thought, the ever-smiling, careless, joyous sex riveted his early wonder, and seemed to beckon his young steps to stray amongst them.

There is,—(we must moralize for a moment, however antiquated the usage,) there is an immortal spirit in novelty which fans the flickering lamp of the hopeless, and, till its images have passed, shuts out the dark calamities of life. Mortimer, a ruined, heart-stricken, helpless child of fortune, committed to an unsparing world, sorrowing for the past and trembling for the future, forgot the sadness of his day as he neared the great capital. Curiosity gained her seat again in his yet unbroken heart, youth yielded her quickening balsam, and his pulse rose high with expectation as he spurred on his horse towards the gate of Saint Denis. "Now," he cried, with a transport which had like to have awakened the suspicions of a surly soldier. "Now I shall see the great city, the glory of the world, and the grand nation! Now for the exhaustless gaiety and joyous life which England talks of!"

It was on the 26th of July 1830, about four in the afternoon, when Mortimer rode through the gate of Saint Denis. But in the fauxbourg which he had just passed there was neither laughter nor pastime, there was scarcely a population. Some few stragglers loitered along in sullen idleness, and women might be seen in

anxious converse gazing with eager eyes on papers which were handed about amongst them. Anger and sorrow were the beacons of each countenance; or if there were an exception, it was the care and dulness of a smothering brow, beneath which great deeds lay hidden. "It was the suburb," thought Mortimer; "the suburbs of London are sad and joyless," and he dashed on into the Rue Saint Denis, thence to the Rue Honoré, and was near the Palais Royal, before he could resolve upon inquiring concerning the strange peculiarities of that day; for the silence and gloom had perplexed his mind; the enchantment was dissolved, the Parisian heaven seemed a fable, and a blighted forest would have been as equal to the goal of a stranger's hope, as the thoroughfares of the French capital at this uncertain interval. But it was the dead calm before the blast of the war-trumpet, the hushing stillness before the heaving of the hurricane, the unbroken sleep which anticipates the roll of the thunder. In the Rue Honoré, Mortimer seemed to recover for an instant from his wonder, and accosted a gendarme; but the man was intent on other objects, and heard his laboured speech without attention.

"Is this the way to the Palace of the Tuileries?" he asked of another, whose garb was the farthest removed from the military.

"*Oui, Monsieur,*" was the reply, and the person passed rapidly on, not vouchsafing a look at the Englishman.

"How strange!" said the traveller; "have I heard the tales of misrepresenting foreigners? have I read the books of fire-side speculators?"

It is impossible to calculate either upon the probable extent or continuance of Mortimer's astonishment, had not his surprise been diverted by the spectacle of a vast number of persons congregated in the gallery of Orleans, in the Palais Royal. All were fastened upon one object, it was an *affiche* upon the wall relating to the public press. No pen can describe, nor imagination conceive the earnestness with which the multitude devoured with their eyes this seemingly portentous paper. So anxious were the crowd to become acquainted with the intelligence, that some would mount upon their neighbours, making their backs temporary pulpits, over which they leaned for the purpose of gratifying their curiosity. Deep murmurs and sounds of fierce disapprobation followed upon

each announcement, and each reading of the contents of this paper. Mortimer was undeceived, he discerned the tokens of great public agitation.

"And what was the matter?" inquired the stranger.

"*Les ordonnances du Roi,*" was the surly and solitary reply which he received from the most obliging of those who surrounded him.

At this instant there was a loud cry of "*Les gendarmes, les gendarmes, à bas les gendarmes!*" That force was now, indeed, approaching to disperse the people, and in great numbers; a collision took place, and Mortimer, being forced back with the retiring crowd, thought himself happy in escaping without serious hurt from the clutches of both parties. He had the excessive good fortune to be received within the precincts of an hotel, where the master, a strange exception to the Parisian throng, was still hesitating between the government and the insurgent faction. The host had married an English woman, and she had infused into his mind full draughts of the horrors which her nation entertains of the bare idea of a revolution. Mortimer beheld from a window that savage and sanguinary contest in which all ranks joined, from the wealthy *marchand* to the cabriolet drivers and street cleansers.

The tide at length passed away; the idol, Liberty, was proclaimed conqueror amidst the acclamations and gratulations of tens of thousands, and Mortimer observed, for the first time, the long-expected smiles and careless vivacity of those with whom he had fixed his sojourn.

While Priminheere was taking the most conclusive steps for supplanting his former rival, Mortimer was devising plans for surmounting his difficulties, and calculating upon the probabilities of a speedy return to his own country. But many of the designs which he projected, like the addle-headed visions of the inexperienced, were impracticable; not even a trial could be made of them. The speculative fancies of the night would often yield their richly gilded prospects to the sober calmness of the morning; and again some highly coloured hopes would rise before the sunset, destined, in their turn, to give place to another and another more favoured picture. Mortimer was no author, (fortunately, perhaps for him,) or he might have availed himself of

the annals of the Revolution as a source of profit and of distinction; he had never applied his mind to mechanics, or to philosophy, and, therefore, found no access to the meetings of the learned, or the closet of the ambitious. He was, besides, a stranger in a well-peopled city, where prejudice would have been ready to crush the strongest powers unaided by fortitude, and consequently, where the well-meaning English gentleman might indeed spend his all, but could never hope for the humblest stipend from his needy neighbours. Without doubt, then, it may well be conceived that his hours vanished without the profit of a single useful thought, of one well-concerted plan, one flattering prospect of emancipation: and thus the days went forward till the advent of the wedding, which we have not long since mentioned, when the Calvinist had made his game sure, by enforcing the fatal mortgage-deed on the one side, and securing the opulent heiress on the other.

The law is a slow but certain destroyer; it delays the stroke, but suffers no foreign force to avert its point: now winding through intricate mazes, it amuses the devoted victim, but then again arises when least expected, and remorselessly inflicts the *coup de grace*. After a morning's stroll in the Jardin des Plantes, where he had been indulging in feelings of the most bitter despair, Mortimer, on his return to his lodgings, found one day, about this time, a letter which contained this last work of legal warfare. The enclosure was a document, which distinctly informed the person to whom it was addressed, that unless he should appear within a fortnight from the date in London, his estate in Bedfordshire would be forfeited to the mortgagee. Enclosed also was a letter from Priminheere to the unfortunate owner of the property, announcing his intention of purchasing the mortgagee's interest, and of making some little provision for the exiled inhabitants of Byrdwood, and further advising that Mortimer should remain abroad for a short time, until the danger which menaced him should have passed away.

Of his contemplated marriage the writer had taken the precaution not to speak: it was no part of his duty to do so; and it was a rule with James Priminheere, never to enter into unnecessary explanations. But there was sufficient cause for anger, for regret, and for de-

spair, without the additional news of Miss Hamilton's late decision; and Mortimer, like a disconcerted child of misfortune, walked into the Palais Royal, in the darkest mood to which human nature can be subject. Suicide, that fell monster of a distracted thought, had not yet presented the alluring charms of annihilation to his senses: he was weary of life, indeed, but knew it not; and he was still pacing the square, with feelings which might have urged him to disgrace and death, when a stranger seized his arm.

"Monsieur Mortimer!"

"At your service, Sir."

"You will recollect dining with me at Fresney's, a few days since?" pursued the stranger. "Your conversation was agreeable, and you will pardon me for renewing an acquaintance at a time when (*excusez Monsieur*) you seem, from your appearance, to need a friend."

The gentleman whom he addressed truly warranted the melancholy idea which the stranger had entertained of him; Mortimer's dejected looks and desperate bearing would have arrested the momentary attention of the most careless.

Overjoyed to find sympathy in a strange land, and from one, too, with whose manners he had been equally pleased at the accidental meeting alluded to, it is not surprising that an inexperienced youth like Mortimer should mention somewhat at large the calamities of the past, and the hovering evils of the future.

"Very unfortunate, indeed, Sir!" was the comment of the stranger: "this is not a place for an English wanderer to find pity or assistance; but—" he paused for a second, and twirled his moustaches, "I should be unwilling to leave you in this unfriended state—Do you know that house?" said he, pointing to No. 54.

"No:" was the answer.

"You may retrieve your circumstances there with a little discretion," observed the other, with a significant air.

Mortimer did not comprehend him.

"*Ah! vous ne me comprenez pas,*" said the officer, for such was the rank of the speaker, who now explained to his acquaintance the chances of the game of Rouge et Noir, together with the immense fortunes which had been acquired at the house in question.

This was, however, a dangerous essay on the part of the stranger, for, whatever might have been the failures of Mortimer's education, his mother had nurtured him in a detestation of gaming. The officer perceived the instinctive shudder.

"*Mais!*" said he, "it is patronized by the government; they derive an immense revenue from a tax which the keepers of these houses of amusement pay for their licenses."

Mortimer was not convinced.

"*Bon, bon!*" repeated the officer. "*Je suis très faché, mais j'ai fait tout ce qu'on peut faire dans ce cas là. Au revoir, Monsieur. Je devois vous présenter à Mademoiselle De ——, la déesse de la café du peuple, et après vous pourriez faire l'expérience des cartes à la table du cinquante quatre, mais, Monsieur—*"

"I will go with you to the café with pleasure," interrupted Mortimer, "and perhaps I may be able to overcome my scruples afterwards."

Despair had dictated to the unfortunate young man, that his last friend was now on the point of deserting him, and he resolved on accompanying the officer without delay, in fact, whithersoever the latter might lead him.

Finding him thus placable, the officer took him, not to the *café*, but to a *restaurant*, where the cordial stimulus of two bottles of excellent Hermitage assisted Mortimer in regaining some degree of composure, and in dissipating, at the same time, the inconvenient restraints of his education. The generous and elevating wine soon brought his sentiments into harmony with those of his companion, who really befriended his situation, and now did not hesitate to propose again the only method which, as he thought, might extricate his acquaintance from impending destruction. They walked to the Palais Royal, and soon entered the brilliant apartments, where Fortune presides in all her dazzling splendours and enchantments. In the first room which they visited was a round table, upon which several numbers, from one upwards, were inscribed circularly. On either side the words, "*Rouge*" and "*Noir*," "*Pair*" and "*Impair*," were painted. But in addition to these words and numbers were several small dells or hollows, with similar figures imprinted on them. The officer of the

table then took an ivory ball, which he threw with some force along a channel so as to describe a rapid circle, and after this evolution, the ball descended into one of these dells. If the player had placed his money upon the figure on the board which corresponded with that in the dell where the ball had fallen, he became entitled to thirty times the amount of his stake; if, on the contrary, he had "backed" some other number, he lost. If the number were even, "*pair*" had it; if it were of a red colour, the player on *rouge* was the conqueror, and *impair* and *noir* lost all the stakes which were advanced upon them. This little trifle attracted many admirers, several of whom fluttered round the brilliant circle in hopes of the great prize, till they had lost all their present cash, and were obliged to withdraw for a supply. Some were so captivated here, that they could never reach the second chamber, where the full tide of play flourished; and Mortimer was tempted to throw a five franc piece upon Noir, which he lost.

"Come," said the officer, "we will not waste our time here; let us go on;" and they accordingly entered a room magnificently furnished, and gorgeously illuminated, where from fifty to a hundred persons were assembled, some sitting near the table, some standing about it, and all earnestly engaged in the game of *rouge et noir*.

"Try your fortune here," said the officer. But his companion was struck by the varied countenances which he beheld, and remained for some time contemplating the alternate sallies of exultation and despair around him.

"*Allons, Monsieur, jouez,*" exclaimed his friend.

"But look at the wildness of that man's manner," said Mortimer, in much agitation; "that poor fellow will most assuredly destroy himself."

"*Ah, mon ami,*" answered the officer, observing a young man who had been losing a few hundred francs, and who was as inexperienced a player as his own acquaintance. "*On fait ici toujours comme ça.*"

Thus encouraged, Mortimer at length committed a louis to the uncertain fortune of the cards. He ventured upon *rouge*, and won; then on *noir*, and won; on *rouge*, and won again. After several more hazards, which

were equally propitious, the officer proposed that they should adjourn to the last room.

"Here," said he, "no one is allowed to stake less than half a louis; but never mind, rely on fortune."

Very few persons were engaged at this table. A dashing, desperate spendthrift, with a handful of notes, was standing in the plenitude of independence, throwing away five hundred franc billets with one hand, and picking up, occasionally, a fifty franc note with the other. Excited as much by the vanity of being admired by the surrounding spectators, as by the play, the gamester would, but for the appearance of Mortimer, have lost, in all likelihood, the whole contents of his pocket-book. The play of the latter, however, diverted the attention of those around, and the other, having ceased to be the subject of attraction, speedily retired from the scene.

"Place a napoleon—pshaw! a louis, I mean, on the *rouge*," said the officer.

"*Neuf. Huit. Rouge gagne, et le couleur perd*," said the dealer, announcing the event of the cards, and tossed a louis upon that of Mortimer.

"Don't play this time," said the officer.

"*Rouge perd, et le couleur gagne.*"

The dealer looked round, gathered a few straggling louis from the *rouge*, and handed one or two to the *noir*.

"*Moitié*," said an officer, throwing a bill of fifty francs upon the *rouge*.

"Throw a louis now on the *rouge*," said the officer to Mortimer. He did so, and won. "Now leave both," said the officer again. Mortimer was again successful.

"The *rouge* is in for luck—don't take a single louis away." Mortimer had his double stakes thrown to him again, and again, and again.

"I'll bet on that heap," said a stranger, looking towards Mortimer's winnings.

"Why doesn't he take them away?" said another.

The play went on, and the heap increased three, four, five times more.

"Now stand steadily to the *rouge*, and you make your fortune," said the officer, vehemently restraining the outstretched hand of his friend, who was endeavouring to grasp the thousand louis he had already won. Five times more did fortune declare for the *rouge*, making altogether fourteen, and the property now at stake on

the side of Mortimer amounted to upwards of sixteen thousand louis, the dealers having waived the law of the table restricting the stake to twelve thousand francs. They now paused; and fully expected that *Monsieur l'étranger* would remove his gains. And he would have done so but for the intoxicating flattery of his guide, who (though we cannot applaud his judgment in so doing) actually enjoined and persuaded the young adventurer to risk another chance. "You will have double," said he with a most persuasive emphasis.

"*Quel sot!*" said a Frenchman, observing the invincible mountain of money.

"*Fou, fou, fou!*" muttered another, who saw sufficient on the board to make any man comfortable for life.

Meanwhile the dealers persuaded themselves that the play must change.

"*Allons, Messieurs, le jeu est prêt. Il n'y a rien plus. Un!*"

"Oh!" exclaimed Mortimer, who knew that it was a chance of nine to one against him. The officer was silent. A dead pause ensued while the cards were counting for *noir*.

"*Après,*" said the dealer, and a burst of intense feeling broke forth amongst the bystanders, whilst the dealer gathered the stakes on the board into a corner, it being the rule, that if the cards tell thirty-one both for *rouge* and *noir*, the table has another chance, and the players must continue their original risk. Mortimer was reprieved.

"*Quarante,*" He was overjoyed.

"*Après,*" "Ah!"—but his friend checked the rising exclamation of impatience.

"*Messieurs, le jeu est fait. Sept—Deux, rouge gagne, et le couleur.*" And Mortimer was master of nearly 33,000 louis.

"*J'ai une petite proposition à faire, mon ami,*" said the obstinate and dauntless officer.

"*Il n'y a que quinze fois. On sait que la rouge a gagné seize, dix-sept, oui, vingt fois; vous gagnerez un palais. Ne manquez vous la fortune Monsieur. Elle ne vous manque pas.*"

"*Messieurs, le jeu est fait,*" said the dealer.

"*Un.*"

"Now, Sir, you have ruined me most cruelly," ejaculated the wretched Mortimer.

"*Attendez, Monsieur, attendez, le cou est fini.*"

"*Huit. Il y a un autre carte là, Monsieur,*" said the officer to the dealer.

"*Ah! oui. Je vous demande mille pardons, Monsieur.*" A card had accidentally fallen to the ground, and as it was proved to have slipped down during the last *cou*, or deal, the last play was of course rescinded. And now Mortimer might have regained his wealth, but he was not aware of his power to do so, and the inflexible old Colonel was irretrievably determined to try another hazard. Intense was the gaze of at least one hundred spectators.

"*Cinq.*" "*Quarante.*" "*Oh, demande pardon encore, Messieurs, ce n'st pas ca.*"

"The immense stake has perplexed the officers of the table," said Mortimer's friend.

"*Quatre et sept, ce fait quarante un. Voila, ah, Monsieur,*" said the dealer looking towards Mortimer, "*vous avez la bonheur. Cinq. Quatre. Rouge gagné, et le couleur perd.*"

"*Messieurs, le jeu est fait,*" continued he rather hastily; but Mortimer with extreme agitation had cleared the board of nearly 50,000 pounds, and in spite of the remonstrances of the Colonel, who urged that this was but the sixteenth *rouge*, rushed out of the house in a far more formidable and phrensied state of excitement than when he entered it. His friend followed, and saw him safely sheltered at his lodgings, after receiving liberal offers of money, which were declined, and boundless profusions of thanks, which the good officer accepted with a full and feeling heart.

CHAPTER VI.

A GENERAL ELECTION.

"God bless the King!"—SHAKESPEARE.

THE first reflections of Mortimer on a sleepless pillow were, that he could now redeem his estate and claim his bride. His friend, the Colonel, even recommended him, at parting, to quit Paris. He aided in

procuring the necessary passport, and in converting the immense treasure of the gaming-table to the best advantage; and having, according to his way of thinking, (and indeed successfully,) acted the good Samaritan towards the Englishman, bade the latter an affectionate farewell. And now we might have passed over all mention of the voyage and the land journeys which lay between this gentleman and his home, and have settled him safely at his Bedfordshire estate, but for an adventure which occurred in the steamer, and which materially affected his coming prospects. Naturally reserved, and at present a little proud, perhaps, of the good fortune which had been lavished upon him, Mortimer conversed sparingly with his fellow-voyagers. But although slightly regardful himself of the people around him, he did not escape the notice of a comfortably-looking, portly, powdered personage, who watched every event and paid to all the respect of observation. He was one of those highly-favoured men, who, without connexion or property, had contrived to possess himself of a considerable portion of both. Having, at length, gained the confidence of sundry wealthy persons who preferred the superintendence of an agent in the management of their concerns to a painfully personal attention on their own parts, he had derived such large emoluments as amply to warrant his indulging in all the elegances and luxuries of a tour. Returning at this time full of the pleasing recollections of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Italy, he thought he beheld in Mortimer a person to whom he might be of service and who might in return be serviceable to him. Availing himself, therefore, of the polished bow and courteous air which had attracted so many clients and friends, and which continental manners had rendered still more imposing, he soon convinced the object of his attentions, that, let the rest of the passengers be whom they might, his acquaintance was at least worth the short trial.

We have said, that Mortimer was not very ably tutored in the world's great courses, and almost blush for his inexperience in acquainting this stranger, after a brief courtship, with his luck in the Palais Royal, and, indeed, with the exultation which he felt at the certainty of redeeming his estate. But Mr. Soland, although he had not met, in the course of his practice, with so

many instances of the recovery of property, as, alas! of its irredeemable departure, was yet no knave, as the world expound that word. Here was a fine young man just emancipated from the deepest distress, on his way home in the tide of glee and gaiety, without a friend to advise him as to the disposition of his gains, or the mode of disencumbering his domain. At least, such was the deduction of Mr. Soland from a very assiduous observation.

"And how will you proceed towards the liquidation of this burthen upon Byrdwood Hall, dear Sir?" inquired the latter with an earnestness at once respectful and insinuating.

"My father was accustomed to consult a solicitor, Sir, in the latter period of his life," replied Mortimer, "and I must find him out immediately on my return."

"Would it be an impertinent inquiry to ask, dear Sir, the amount of your incumbrances, and the stage of the proceedings against you?" asked again Mr. Soland, a little disconcerted at the mention of another solicitor.

"Fifteen thousand pounds."

Then, thought the agent, he will have five-and-thirty thousand left, perhaps less by a thousand or two after the payment of Chancery Bills.

"You will have, good Sir, a large sum at command," continued Mr. Soland, "with which, if you apply it well, you may hold up your head as high as any man in Bedfordshire."

"How do you mean? how apply it well?"

"Well now, there is an approaching election—you may be returned, considering all things, at a small expense."

The phrase, considering all things, was significant, but perfectly unintelligible to Mortimer. Mr. Soland needed not have thrown away a valuable hint on one who could not profit by it. But the idea of becoming a Member of the House of Commons had now been presented for the first time to Mortimer, and he professed great obligations for the suggestion.

"I shall be happy to avail myself of your hint, Mr. Soland, and of your services also," said the gratified young man. "However," added he, "it must be inconvenient for you to leave London, for such a purpose.

Supposing, now, that I were to request your attendance at a contest, for instance—"

"Make yourself easy, dear Sir, on that score," observed Soland. "I know of nothing at this dull season to detain me in London; and although the rules of my profession forbid me from tendering my services, yet, if you are so kind as to call for them, I can assure you that I should be ungrateful, if I were to hesitate for a moment."

And thus Mortimer was provided with a lawyer of eminence, to pave the way for his entrance into the House, and with a parliamentary agent to maintain his seat, when elected. The parties to this conversation separated with expressions of much civility, and feelings of mutual approbation.

The long-expected marriage-day between Priminheere and Jane Hamilton, had at length arrived. On that same day Mortimer left town for Bedfordshire, having apprised his mother and sister, who were still living at Byrdwood, of his approach. The ambition of Priminheere was now on the point of being amply gratified: he was within a few hours to be master of a lovely girl with fifty thousand pounds; he was, within a fortnight, to be put in possession of Byrdwood Hall; and was currently spoken of as a candidate for the county, at the ensuing election. Merrily did the bells ring on the morning of the wedding; it was considered to be an auspicious day for the neighbourhood to witness the union of a wealthy couple, who were destined to reside amongst the peasantry. The family at Alderbury Park rose much earlier than usual; the adornments of the bride, her abundant presents and costly jewels, arranged the evening before with great precision, were displayed for the last time before the ceremony. The high prospects of her son-in-law had delighted Mrs. Hamilton, and she entered the breakfast-room with an air of unfeigned good humour. All parties appeared to have coalesced, and cheerfulness assumed her pleasing dominion far and wide. Even the bride, in general the most anxious companion of the groupe, showed less emotion, than is usually seen upon such solemnities. Priminheere—the gloomy Priminheere, rose from his bed at the earliest peep of the light, and a fugitive gleam of joy stole over his dark countenance, as he thought on the worldly goods which were so speedi-

ly to be his for ever. The canker, which was wont to embitter his best hours, ceased its unwholesome gnawing; he was free to rejoice awhile in the strength of his youth, and if he had been a partner in evil, his conscience now, at least, desisted from her distressful threatenings.

The carriages were now in readiness to convey the happy parties to the place where the ever-binding ritual was to be performed, and the coachmen urged their horses, that the clergyman might not be kept waiting. But never was the good Doctor Dundrosy more quickened to exertion than upon this emergency. His usual hour for banding together the village striplings was that most canonical of times—half-past eleven, and now he was summoned to assume the sacred vestments at the early season of half-past nine. In vain did his watchful housekeeper proclaim to him that it had struck eight for some time; balmy sleep sat triumphant on the doctor's helm, and he remained wholly insensible to the shakings of his faithful Priscilla. And thus harmlessly silent would he have continued, had not Mr. Supine, the clerk, been more mindful of the bounteous fee which he expected, than his master of his own; for the rector looked also to a descending shower of gold, and he dreaded that, if he had refused to make his appearance as requested, the hand of abundance would have been shortened towards him. No other inducement or stimulus could possibly have operated upon the Reverend Doctor Dundrosy to dispense with his accustomed habits. The clerk, we said, remembered more keenly than the parson the gratuity, which wealth was expected to present him with. Accordingly, overcoming with magnanimous resolution his own inveterate propensity, he tumbled out of his snug bed, hastened on his clothes, and, with an oaken cudgel, (his guardian against thieves,) belaboured the door of the doctor, with a perseverance and power which the freshness of the morning breeze could alone have lent him.

"Gracious! master, here they come," said the despairing housekeeper.

"Who come?" grumbled forth the doctor, half-roused up by the sturdy strokes which were descending on his portal.

"The company, Sir—the bride—merciful powers! let me go and see, Sir."

"You should not swear, Priscilla," answered the rector; "but verily, Priscilla, you had better go and see."

The result of this investigation was, that the clerk underwent an objurgation for his presumption, but as the doctor could not help applauding the step which had been taken, as well as the spirit of the undertaking, (for he well knew his servant's foible,) he vented no further ecclesiastical thunders against the delinquent. But this adventure of the clerk produced a good consequence, for the doctor was up, and the church open, and the garlands were strewed in the holy path, and the ringers were prepared to sound the cheering peal, and the cavalcade had not yet arrived.

The trampling of horses was at length heard, and the joyous train approached the church amidst the loud gratulations of the fickle assemblage; but as the retinue of the bride was advancing on the one side, a horseman rode rapidly into the village on the other, and although he eluded the gazing groups, the restless eye of the Calvinist encountered the exile Mortimer; and there was an elateness in his bearing, a victorious fire in his eye, which disconcerted Priminheere. Surely, thought the dissenter, he cannot have returned to redeem his estate. But the high port of Mortimer awakened the most anxious fears in the mind of the bridegroom, and his countenance fell to rise no more, till the sun of his marriage-day had been long set. The procession moved into the church, the priest stood in his due solemnity at the communion table, Jane Hamilton appeared to vouch her assent to the ceremony, and by her side walked the agitated Priminheere, torn by conflicting passions, pale as a birchen stem, and reckless of the lady whom the coming service was about to make his own. The ordinance proceeded, but the bridegroom was wandering; his careless mien attracted the notice even of Doctor Dundrosy, who paused, but said nothing. The bride observed her lord's confusion, and trembled. Mrs. Hamilton was incensed, and with difficulty repressed her feelings. But when the sealing words, "I will," were required from the mouth of the husband, his indifference and absence excited the astonishment of all. Dr. Dundrosy, with a respectful bow, asked if he were ill; his mother-in-law more pressingly renewed the inquiry; it was echoed around, and it was not until this

general appeal that he seemed conscious of his condition.

"I will," said he, sullenly.

The doctor would have shaken his head at these auspices, but he dared not give offence. In a few more moments the rite was finished without interruption, and Priminheere was now committed to the new duties of a husband, and (if he should fulfil his pledge) of a member of the Church of England.

It was now Mortimer's turn to atone severely for the shock his sudden presence had occasioned. He had passed the village at a rapid pace, but the unusual gathering together had struck his attention, and he quickly learned that although he might, indeed, succeed in redeeming Byrdwood, his anciently affianced bride was lost to him for ever. This was a lesson of sorrow to his uprisen heart, which the sight of his beloved relatives could scarcely soften. If Priminheere had been terror-stricken at the sight of his old rival, he was now amply revenged by the blow which this intelligence had inflicted upon one towards whom he still felt the resentment of an enemy. In few days, however, the keenness of his vexation abated, and he resolved to forget a woman who had treated him with indifference, and whose further acquaintance it would be both idle and dangerous to covet. In the interim, too, Mr. Soland paid him a visit at Byrdwood. It was on the day after he had called upon the attorneys Dell and Head, for the purpose of cancelling the fatal mortgage deed, when Mr. Soland's arrival was announced.

"I called, Sir," said he to Mortimer, "to give you a piece of intelligence, which, although perhaps not new to you, you may yet turn to your advantage. The neighbouring borough of —— is open, and two candidates are immediately wanted of liberal principles. The independent body of electors are dissatisfied with their late members, and it occurred to me that your wish of coming into Parliament might now be gratified."

"Your news, I can assure you, come quite fresh to me," replied Mortimer, "for I have been engaged hitherto in considering the important subject of disencumbering my estate, and it was but yesterday when I arranged for the payment of the mortgage and the costs attendant upon it."

Mr. Soland felt the inexperience of the speaker who could talk so carelessly about the settlement of a long standing account and a bill of costs, and he instantly inquired whether Mortimer had employed the solicitor to whom he had alluded in the vessel. Mortimer hesitated, and looked in some measure astonished at the question; but Mr. Soland observed, that he felt some little interest in the affair, and begged to know the state of the proceedings.

"I went to the office, triumphantly enough, beyond doubt," said Mortimer, "and saw one of the partners, Mr. Head, I believe. I then tendered them a cheque on my banker in London, for the amount of the mortgage, expressing my willingness at the same time to pay any reasonable sum for costs, and at the same instant I demanded possession of the securities."

"The last was a very prudent and right measure, Sir," observed Mr. Soland.

"Mr. Head," resumed Mortimer, "then looked attentively at the draft with which I had presented him, and after pausing a moment, said, (much surprised,) that he would go and consult his partner. He however soon returned, and informed me, that, in justice to their clients, they could not take the cheque of one who was almost a stranger to them; that there was, besides, an account for law charges to the amount of six hundred pounds and upwards; and that the mortgage deeds could not be given up, because they involved another title, but that I should be at liberty, nevertheless, to inspect them whenever I might think fit."

"That is rather a strange civility after the payment of fifteen thousand pounds, dear Sir," said Mr. Soland: "but you did not pay the money, did you, Sir?"

"No. They refused my security," said Mortimer; "but I intend going there again very soon with the principal and costs, which will silence all difficulties."

"But you are, under ordinary circumstances, entitled, as a matter of right, to the custody of your satisfied mortgage deeds," observed Mr. Soland. "Not," continued the agent, "but that these gentlemen may be most respectable practitioners;" for Mr. Soland rarely, if ever committed himself, by any sudden opinion: "but, dear Sir," and the lawyer deliberated for an instant, "you really are the true and only proprietor of these

documents after the payment of the sum in question. Permit me, if you have no adviser, to see, at all events, that you have justice done you in this respect."

Mortimer signified his assent, and expressed his obligations. "And now," continued he, "after having given you my thanks, Mr. Soland, for this kind interference, and attention to my concerns, let me ask you about the management of the borough election, of which you were so kind as to speak but just now. Is the gaining a seat in the House of Commons attended with much expense?"

"The expense, dear Sir, when a candidate starts, is very uncertain: if you buy a borough——"

"Buy a borough, Mr. Soland?" exclaimed Mortimer; "it is impossible to afford any such sum."

"Oh dear, Sir? you are mistaken; under present circumstances," (words which Mr. Soland pronounced with peculiar emphasis,)—"you may have one exceedingly cheap—very much so, indeed."

"The present circumstances," alluded to, were perfectly incomprehensible to Mortimer.

"Or," continued the agent, "if, as I have now proposed, you stand for this place, your disbursements will depend upon the number of persons for whom it will be necessary, in some way or other, to provide. But I must introduce you to your intended constituents, good Sir, at your convenience."

"This step, I fear, will be to my disadvantage," observed Mortimer; "because I must confess myself to be rather inexperienced, as to the state of public affairs at present."

"There you are underrating yourself, dear Sir," replied Mr. Soland; "the chief requisites for you are a bold address, and a fair knowledge of the common things, likely to please the class of persons to whom you are addressing yourself."

Mortimer returned thanks for these suggestions, and acceded to the proposal.

The country was now occupied with the busy scenes of a general election. Many boroughs had already returned for the hundredth time the transmitted favourites of their fostering patrons. The solemn meeting had been held in several privileged spots, where the selected senators were proposed, seconded, and sent unanimous-

ly to Parliament amidst the plaudits of the multitude, the pealing of the bells, and the outpouring of the ale hogsheads. Many independent freemen had already nominated the subjects of their choice, who had found no difficulty in gaining the general suffrages of those they felt ambitious to represent. Scot and lot, pot-wallopers, and sturdy corporators—all were in motion, clamouring for loyalty and independence. Never were the Old English adages of "fair play," and "look before you leap," more verified than at this festive season. Here were, indeed, the saturnalia of the ancients. The careful, teasing hesitation of the voter, the earnest conclusive prayer of the candidate, the last sacred appeal to honour, the bitter reproach for faithless promise-breaking—all these went round in turn, stirring up the ceaseless bustle of the day. Old wrongs were pocketed up with silence, (unless, indeed, there were any hope of a contest); strife and hatred were declared exterminated, the landlord forgot his rent, and the tradesman turned his blind eye to the ledger. Virtues spangled where none suspected their existence, and qualities of all sorts were called up on every side to adorn those for whom such honours were designed. Such days of rejoicing were there amongst the favourites of fortune who installed their representatives in the senate according to the immemorial rites of the Constitution. Priminheere, despairing of the slightest success in canvassing the county, was content with a Treasury-seat belonging to one of his wife's relations. He learned and assented to the condition of his return, which was none other than a punctual obedience to the roar of the division bell. His reception was enthusiastic, and but for an attempt at compliment, which he failed in accomplishing, he might be said to have parted with his constituents on the most friendly terms. But, like the Galilean of old, his speech betrayed him, and though he had bestowed many toilsome hours on its creation, there was an uncompromising effect in its delivery which gave but small hopes of the future senator. Yet, such was the abundance of his gifts and good cheer, that this temporary discomfiture was soon forgotten, and the health of the new representative was toasted amidst a din of universal cheers. Thus closed the scene.

Mortimer, meanwhile, was engaged in soliciting the

voices of a numerous party who had been for some time violent in their pretensions to free voting, and had even advertised for an independent candidate. Mr. Soland had become acquainted with their wishes, and very justly concluded that he now had an opportunity of serving his new acquaintance as well as himself in a legitimate cause. In the course of a few conversations he had awakened the mind of Mortimer to a due sense of the duties of the canvass which he had undertaken, and his pupil so well improved under the management of an experienced tutor, as to make speeches of no despicable length upon subjects which he had hardly heard of before. Whether it were an address from the balcony, or in the chamber of some patronising host, or a pointed appeal in the provincial journals, or a sally against his opponents, Mortimer was found entirely equal to each effort; and he, consequently, gained ground in the esteem of the varied crowd whose good will he was thus impatient to acquire.

On one evening, however, his newly discovered talents were put to a test, as alarming as it was unexpected. A number of requisitionists desired the company of their new candidate at the Chequers. He had been extremely active during the day, both in his personal endeavours to gain fresh promises, as well as in unremitting appeals to the assembled mobs by which he hoped to conciliate the people generally. Ten or twelve awkward repulses had not contributed to raise his spirits, or heighten the tone of his eloquence, and it was with some difficulty that Mr. Soland persuaded him to attend the gathering together of the freemen. Nevertheless, between seven and eight, Mortimer entered the Chequers with his friend and supporter. Joy and joviality were reigning in this ancient inn at the time of the *entrée*. Glasses of grog and flagons of beer decorated the widely spread tables, and an artillery of smoke played from fifty independent mouths. At the end of the room sat an elderly personage, of noble dimensions, in a shrouding blue coat, buff waistcoat, and blue pantaloons. His posture was erect and commanding, and he stretched his one independent leg (for he had that one only) to a considerable and imposing distance from his large wooden chair. He was the President of the evening, and was installed by virtue of a special sum-

mons sent him by a numerous party of electors, who trusted mainly to his powers of oratory for the maintenance of order, and to his pertinacious habit of questioning for further information as to the intellect and political bias of the new candidate. Men of keen curiosity and no small research sat indifferently amongst the neighbouring groups, but all bowed to the behest of the old soldier, whose prowess had been celebrated in that part of the country for years succeeding years. All rose to pay their homage to him who had caused the glorious libations of that evening to flow with such energy, and Mr. Soland, a gentleman by no means unknown to the majority, received the congratulations of the President. This officer had advanced with as much dignity as his wooden-leg would allow, to welcome his distinguished visiters; and it must be added, that if the loss of a limb detracted in some measure from his lofty bearing, a bluff, broad, tawny, weather-beaten visage amply compensated for the defect. He motioned to Mr. Mortimer, requesting that he would fill the chair now left vacant for the purpose, and that gentleman accordingly ascended to the post of honour greeted by universal applause. The King having been drunk, with one or two other toasts of course, the independent electors were immediately given by the advice of Mr. Soland, and the new candidate's health was forthwith proposed and honoured with an immense flood of cheers. Volumes of smoke from the bottom of the room followed these acclamations. Mortimer then rose, and delivered an harangue in the most guarded terms, and according to the especial direction of his adviser. Seasoned with appeals to popular feeling, and general declarations of independence, it carefully avoided, like the Royal speeches, any descent into particulars; it abounded, moreover, with catching phrases, denominated clap-traps by satirists; and concluded by a full expression of confidence in the electors that they would unanimously concur in making him their representative.

"I shall give," said he at the close, "an honest and independent vote upon all occasions, should you do me the honour of electing me to be your representative; and be assured I shall never be found backward in asserting your just privileges, and protecting the interests which, I earnestly hope, may be entrusted to me."

Strange to say, neither the pointed emphasis which Mortimer had introduced by the peculiar appointment of Mr. Soland, nor this impressive peroration which has been rehearsed, produced the expected or desired effect. Some applause, indeed, arose at the finish of the speech, but it was more like the tribute of courtesy, than the burst of an approving audience.

"This won't do," said the soldier in as low a voice as he could command, but which was nevertheless scarcely a sound lower than the trumpet stop of the organ. "It won't do," repeated old Bravo, (for that was his familiar name,) "without further explanation," he added deliberately.

"What d' ye think of the currency now—eh?" said he, laying down his pipe and looking terrible things at the new President. It was, indeed, an awful, an unprecedented question. But for Mr. Soland the game had been up. Even he was disconcerted; Mortimer was confounded. A moment more, and all the gallons of the new beer bill could not have saved a defeat.

"You must say something," whispered Soland.

"What can I say?" cried Mortimer.

"Something instantly, or you lose the day."

Thus goaded on to action or to ruin, Mortimer rose amidst a profound and inquiring gaze. He began by observing that the subject of the currency had confused the minds of men in general; that the opinions upon that subject were as discordant as they were inconclusive; that his Majesty's Government had lent their best attention to it, but, notwithstanding, that many most statesman-like members of the legislature still entertained ideas entirely opposite to the present system. "Many thinking men too," said Mortimer, "considered that too much stress had been laid upon the question of the Currency; for his part he was rather inclined to be of that opinion, and he confessed he had not decided, nor could he do so, upon a matter, the usefulness of which was, at least, highly doubtful. At all events, he hoped that where so many wise heads had disagreed, he might be excused for not forming a hasty determination; but he should be happy, at the same time, to attend to any suggestion from his constituents." If the former speech displayed boldness, this was remarkable for a modesty prompted by conscious ignorance, but the result was

mainly different. Thunders of applause rewarded the speaker, whose courage rallied as the cheers sounded through the room, and at the same moment the dispirited heart of Mr. Soland was renewed.

"And what d' ye say to the Slave Trade, Sir?" inquired old Bravo, much softened by the address he had just heard.

"You can get on very well there," said Soland.

"I can tell you, gentlemen, in few words," replied Mortimer, "my opinion of that infamous traffic. If you return me to the House of Commons, I will rise in my place night after night to gain freedom for our wretched, degraded, oppressed fellow-creatures; I am against all slavery, whether it be of body or mind."

"Bravo! bravo!" roared out the old soldier, "a bumper in honour of Mr. Mortimer. Here's Mortimer for ever!" added he with an imperial glance, which was the signal for a general rising. "Three times three," cried old Bravo.

"Capital!" said Mr. Soland, gently clapping Mortimer on the back, who, however, shrank instinctively from the compliment. The vehement noise which ensued totally shut out all further information or question; and it was not until the exuberance of rejoicing had passed by, that a word could be heard either on the part of the electors or of their candidate.

"Again—for the slavery!" vociferated a voice of immortal lungs, and three cheers more would have followed but for the interference of old Bravo, who commanded that order should be preserved.

"This will be a good opportunity for us to escape," said Mr. Soland, who felt great uneasiness at the questions which had been put; "there is no knowing whether you may not be tormented with a hundred more of these interrogatories. By a well-turned compliment you may retreat now with great safety, telling them that you hope to see them on your side on the day of election."

Mortimer cordially agreed, and was about to make his last speech.

"What do you think of them there horrid Corn Laws?" roared out another of the independent brotherhood, with a tone not to be denied under pain of offending the whole kith and kin.

"Now you must say something, dear Sir," observed

Soland privately, with an accent of despair. But Mortimer was an altered man.

"When you asked me about the currency, gentlemen," said he, "I own I was a little surprised for the moment, because the question had puzzled the wisest heads, and yet you recieved my excuse with the greatest kindness."

A loud cheer interrupted the speaker.

"I thank you, gentlemen, I thank you sincerely from my heart; but when you ask me what my opinion is upon the Corn Laws, it is the same as to demand of me what I would do upon that subject were I your honoured representative. Gentlemen, the same thought strikes me as must occur to the mind of every uncorrupt and unprejudiced mind. Cheap bread ought to be abundant in the meanest cottage in the realm, and I will so act with respect to the Corn Laws as to secure this inestimable, invaluable benefit, to the poorest creature who sweeps the crossings of our streets."

"Bravo! hurrah! admirable! The Englishman's friend!" exclaimed a dinning medley of tongues, whose accents were soon blended together in another deafening torrent of tremendous cheering.

Mr. Soland, hardly believing in the certainty of this success, instantly rose, and taking Mortimer by the hand, explained, that his friend had undergone great personal fatigue on the morning of that day, that he felt at present a little exhausted, and requested leave to retire; but in the morning they might depend on it, the man of their choice would be at his post, and when the day of trial should come, he would poll the very last freeman who might present himself for the purpose of recording his sentiments. Mortimer signified his assent to this appeal, and having availed himself of the critical moment when popularity had risen to the highest, he withdrew with his agent amidst the shouts, and greetings, and blessings of the assembly.

CHAPTER VII.

A CHAPTER OF INTEGRITY.

"Though no exchequer it commands, 'tis wealth;
And though it wears no riband, 'tis renown." YOUNG.

We must now go back a few weeks for the purpose of relating an incident of no small importance to two

persons of some note in this history. During the absence of her brother, Mary Mortimer had been invited with her mother to the house of a London cousin, whose circle of acquaintance were of that doubtful class which range between the advocates of extreme strictness and the avowed partisans of general amusement. These select coteries are so well known, and have been so frequently described, that any lengthy mention of their characteristics would be worse than superfluous. They are, however, so happily constituted to suit the consciences of all parties, as to admit without scruple a moderate member of Holy Church at one door, and a dissenting brother, not being very particular, at another. Miss Mortimer, a girl of amiable and yielding manners, could not help admiring the liberality of her relative, whilst she fully agreed in the occasional gravity of her conversation. And she equally coincided in those sentiments which permitted the congregating together of small evening parties, where it was endeavoured with much diligence to combine the useful with the agreeable. Far more difficult is it to account for the presence of Charles Priminheere, the Calvinist's brother, at these entertainments. We shall not attempt to do this; nevertheless, as we have already hinted at the Reverend Mr. Fastenon's lectures on the subject of Charles's wanderings from the faith, the reader cannot be so much surprised that the latter should frequent a house where matters were not, to say the truth, pushed to any excess. Be this as it may, there was scarcely a *soirée* at the dwelling of Mrs. Fatima Mortimer at which Priminheere did not attend. The barrister, although not yet a rising favourite, was a man of conciliating habits, and he possessed the agreeable ability of adapting his talk to the capacities and dispositions of those with whom he associated. With a little knowledge of the piano, and no backwardness in showing it, a harmless ballad or two, and an abundant artillery of figurative language, he had succeeded in captivating those, whom it is certainly an honour to win, the fairer portion of his society. To these qualifications he added, notwithstanding, an air of steadiness, and a thoughtful look, which anxiety for success in the world had gradually stamped upon a naturally open countenance.

Mary Mortimer, newly arrived from the country,

where she had been subjected for some time to a sad seclusion, was pleased with the grace and apparent integrity of Charles Priminheere. Some interviews led to an attention on the part of the latter towards the young lady, which she felt by no means prompted to discourage—yet their prospects and intentions were in some measure different. A helpless young woman about to fall into the clutches of a remorseless world, whose pity is but the dupe of pride, could not but regard with pleasure the advances of a respectable stranger. But her admirer, whose finances as a lawyer without much practice could not be much strengthened by the results of matrimony, contemplated no such conclusive event in the first impulses of his preference. She regarded his unsuspicious manners; he delighted in the seeming soundness of her intellect. She viewed his general character with partiality; he was struck with the superiority of her observations. Reflection suggested to her mind that an alliance with an honourable man was desirable in her unprotected condition; and when Priminheere thought on the matter, he considered that a woman of Miss Mortimer's prudence and firmness might establish his affairs instead of hurting them, and, perhaps, create a consistency in his conduct which he well knew to be too vacillating. Mrs. Mortimer, borne down by affliction, had no energy left to ask the particular circumstances and connexions of her daughter's suitor. He was supposed to be a cousin of the Bedfordshire Priminheere, and it is well enough known, that minute explanations are never entered into, till some serious occurrence has rendered the fatal curiosity indispensable. Priminheere, urged on by an increasing passion for the society of Miss Mortimer, had disregarded the similarity which her name bore to that of his brother's enemy, till at length he resolved on addressing her in terms more explicit: a determination which, according to appearances, could not have been unpleasing to the lady, and was not, perhaps, entirely unexpected by her. It was not probable, sensible as he was of the ruined circumstances of the Byrdwood family, that he should suspect the presence of so near a relation to them in a select London assembly. He fell, like a froward child, into the snare which accident had interposed, and at the next morning visit the fluttering declaration soon

dropped from the lips of the barrister. Nothing more passed upon this occasion than the opening of the negotiations, but at this critical moment a strange suspicion intruded itself upon the mind of Mary Mortimer, and as Charles Priminheere returned home, true it is that his mind misgave him. He had been pledging his faith to a girl, of whose religion he knew no more than she did of his own particular profession; and now that the declaration had actually issued, he recovered a little from his intoxication, and thought it time to ascertain the effects of the step he had taken. Yet he loved her tenderly, as much as a man could love a woman after so short a courtship; and when conscience upbraided him for his precipitation, his heart clung to the hope that she might be his with honour. Such a kindred regard was there too in the breast of Mary Mortimer towards him. If suspicion lurked in either breast, it was an unwelcome stranger, fostered, indeed, by the freezing dictates of prudence, but utterly at variance with the emotions which each sought to cherish. Still there lay many a withering thought behind, for Priminheere had his brother's sad example full before his eyes, and Mary Mortimer might object that a Calvinist should woo her, while he should prefer the congregational meeting to the hallowed church of her parents. She also trembled at the gloomy presages of evil, which ever disturb a maiden's lonely hours, and though her mind maintained its resignation, those dark anticipations of the future, which menace every thing, yet assure not any, stole upon her struggling fortitude, and bade her fear the worst.

Short is the interval between lovers' meetings. A few hours only had elapsed before Priminheere appeared to receive his final sentence. In the interim she had gained intelligence of his religious persuasions, and he, on his part, had fondly nurtured the hope of converting his intended wife to his own creed.

"I have called," Miss Mortimer, said he, "to learn my lot at your hands. I am not very apprehensive," added he with a smile.

"I have been considering your proposal," replied the lady, commanding her emotions with her usual decision.

"And it is fatal to me—unfavourable!" interrupted Charles with agitation.

"Stay! I did not say that!" said Miss Mortimer: "a person of your education and manners must feel, dear Sir, the propriety of being more calm—you distress both yourself and me. Let me ask you a question without offence."

Priminheere was pale in an instant; he dreaded that the discovery of his dissenting tenets had occasioned a refusal, and his faintly-uttered "certainly," betokened an approaching trial from which he would gladly have escaped.

"You are of the Calvinistic way of thinking, I understand."

"I have been brought up in that faith," said Charles Priminheere, "and I still adhere to it; it was the doctrine of my father."

"And I am a member of the Church of England," said the lady: "I am glad that we have a just understanding of our respective professions."

"And is this discovery of my religion, which I have kept faithfully, and have never offered to conceal, a ground for rejecting me altogether?"

"Alas!" answered Mary Mortimer, "you are again premature; I have said nothing yet to cause any separation between us. If that painful result should take place, it must be the voluntary effect of your reason. How can we be united with sentiments so dissimilar?"

"And why cannot they be the same?" said Charles, with earnestness.

"How, Sir?"

"The basis of our respective faiths does not differ," said the dissenter: "the same God whom you adore, is the object of our worship also; the same Christ in whom you trust, is our Christ as well."

"That I feel most solemnly, I assure you," replied she: "but are not our forms and ceremonials different?"

"And what, dear Mary, are forms and ceremonials? Why shall they be allowed to cause divisions, and tear asunder the kindest feelings of the heart, when they can be sacrificed without a violation of the vital principle?"

"Sacrificed, dear Sir; how sacrificed?"

"Admit then, for an instant, just for an example," —Charles had almost shrunk from his bold experiment, —"admit, as an instance, that you, dear Mary, that is to say, any one in your present situation, were to ex-

change the creed which he or she might profess, for one which should, upon principle, be the same, although unfettered by ceremonials."

"In other words, and to speak the truth more convincingly," said Miss Mortimer, "what if I were to surrender the liturgy and the rites of the establishment in which I have been carefully educated, for another persuasion, of whose precepts—pardon me for saying—I am entirely ignorant!"

"I feel almost abashed at the proposition," replied the other; "but if there be no scruple of conscience in the way, I see no harm in it."

"Then I will come to the point at once," said the young lady, "and I ask you whether you will yield your objections to our Church and become one of us, for the sake of my hand."

The picture of James Priminheere sold to the rich heiress of Alderbury, and writhing under the smarts of conscience, presented itself vividly to his brother at this moment.

"I ought to despair—and do despair, Mary," exclaimed he: "to whatever faults I may be guilty of—(and they are numerous)—I cannot, will not add the crime of dishonouring my parent, who is in the grave, and my own soul, by deserting the sacred pledges of my profession."

"If you could have done so," answered Miss Mortimer, "I candidly confess to you that our acquaintance would have ceased on far different terms than—" she paused, much agitated, "it may under these circumstances."

"There is then no hope?" cried Priminheere.

"Would you ask me to give up my religion," asked his companion, "when you feel that reluctance to surrender your own? Would to God we had never met!"

"I must beseech your forgiveness, Miss Mortimer, for my haste," exclaimed Charles; "my impatient hurry to state my sentiments to you. It proceeded from a regard which, I fear, must be deprived of its object, though, believe me, that object will ever remain dear."

"You cannot be blamed, Mr. Priminheere; I admire—respect—nay, I may say, regard you for your principles of honour; and it is, indeed, a sad disclosure which has been made this day for my peace of mind, indeed ——" She could proceed no further.

"I cannot sacrifice my religion, Mary," repeated the disconsolate young man; "I have the awful example before me of my brother James—"

"Not the Mr. Priminheere of Bedfordshire?" Miss Mortimer scarcely breathed when she ventured on the question. Charles Priminheere might have avoided this last blow with ordinary foresight. He hesitated. She summoned sufficient courage to look steadily at him, and await his reply. He felt that he had committed himself by mentioning his brother's infirmities, and the connexion of Bedfordshire with the inquiry gave him an indescribable presentiment that this might be the Miss Mortimer of Byrdwood.

"He is the same," Priminheere at length faltered out.

"And I will save you then," said Mary Mortimer, "the pain of a future discovery. I am the sister of the unfortunate young man who was once the undisputed owner of an estate in your brother's neighbourhood; and you see too plainly the sad reason which must in future prevent even an acquaintance between us."

"Mary," exclaimed Priminheere with energy, "that shall not be so; this disclosure is not quite new to me, for I had strongly suspected it, and though I neither can nor dare press you further under these untoward circumstances, do not say that there shall be an eternal bar because our brothers are on terms of hostility. Let us rather seek to reconcile them, and then we shall all be friends at least."

"Alas! it is not possible," replied the agitated girl: "and now that I have learned the painful truth, I must tell you that neither my mother nor brother will ever sanction my seeing you more; and fearful as the duty is, it is mine to obey them in this particular."

"Then you leave me without a sigh or a feeling of regret?" ejaculated Charles.

"Far, far from it, Mr. Priminheere," answered she. "Let us, let us end this hopeless conversation; be satisfied—you will, with your address and industry, obtain a wealthier partner. You would be afflicted in uniting yourself with me, for I fear it would be a union with poverty and dissension."

"Mary, hear me this once," cried Priminheere, as she was rising to quit the room. "I will not desert you by marrying another, whether you are in want or

in affluence. Let us look for better days. Only say that you will not forsake me, and Providence will direct the rest."

"I will not forget you, Mr. Priminheere; let that be your consolation," were Mary Mortimer's parting words.

"That is indeed a consolation," exclaimed Charles, and he retired from the apartment.

No sooner had James Priminheere ascertained that Mortimer was engaged in canvassing the neighbouring borough, a piece of information which was accompanied by a report that the return of the new candidate was certain, than he resolved on using every effort to defeat a man whom he considered, in every respect, his adversary. The sight of his neighbour had confounded him to the last degree, at a time when he fondly imagined that the mastership of Byrdwood and his bridal day would not be long separated; but when he learned the good fortune which had built up Mortimer in that inheritance, his transports were excessive. It was said that there would, in fact, be no contest for the place which had been so actively besieged by the candidate whose exploits we related in the last chapter, and, consequently, that the latter gentleman would, according to the approved phrase, walk over the course. Priminheere gloamed over this rumour, and made a determination to counteract it without delay. Master as he now was of Jane Hamilton and her fortune, he had grown sufficiently powerful to assume some importance in the county; and he was of a temper to assert most fully the advantage which had fallen to his lot. He resolved, therefore, to name a candidate, and to support him with the weight of his newly acquired interest, and with a small share of his purse, if that step should become necessary. Whether he might succeed in involving Mortimer in sudden and almost irretrievable expenses, let the issue of the struggle be as it would, or whether he could manage to vanquish the object of his dislike in the onset, he was well aware, that in order to effect either of these plans, an opponent must be found, and the electors warned of the approaching novelty. All men connected with the borough who were yet in a condition to be bought or sold, must be acquainted, without the delay of a week, that a candidate would

forthwith present himself to the notice of the freemen, with pretensions far superior to those with which they had lately become familiar.

Armed, therefore, with this resolution, James Priminheere earnestly applied himself to find some ambitious and affluent scion, whom he might stimulate to instant action by the promises of his patronage and aid.

Ten years since, and a chance of this kind would have been eagerly caught at, if, indeed, it had not been anticipated. But England's times had changed, and the bold speculator of that period now preferred the security of the Consolidated Three per Cents. to the adventitious cheering of a fickle mob. He who would then have lavished sovereigns, like a Coutts or a Rothschild, for a gleam of popular favour, now sought the solace of a club-room, and shrank from the giant gripe of Reform. Disfranchisement had withered the harvests of that venal throng who were wont to surrender the privileges of their countrymen for a bribe, and the solemn sanction of the bribery oath prospered the advance of purity. But there were still rank spots, and many too, where the weeds of corruption grew luxuriantly; and there were yet dupes who were content to offer sacrifice to a motley crowd, and deem themselves the people's representatives. One of such adventurers was the man whom Priminheere now desired to meet with, and whom he would delight to honour, but they were scarce in his neighbourhood; and his representation was not of itself sufficient to tempt a stranger from a distance to whom he was unknown. Four toilsome and disappointed days did he expend in exaggerating the facilities of access to the borough, depreciating the talents of Mortimer, and depicting the discontent of the electors. In the very first attempt he was unfortunate, for, through an accident, he addressed an inhabitant of the county but slightly known to him, who had been consigned to imprisonment, and visited with a heavy fine, for being too anxious to procure votes at a former election. One said he thought it too late to enter the lists, another urged the probable shortness of the parliament; a third ventured to inquire the cause of his interference to put down Mortimer; but the far greater majority pleaded the want of money to sustain a contest in times which, they said, were already charged with

sufficient evil. Priminheere alleged the opposite politics of Mortimer as the ground of his opposition, but there was, in effect, another and a far deeper reason, as will be seen in the sequel, for his determined tenacity. Foiled on all sides, the services of the reader's old acquaintance, Albert Moonshine, were at length suggested to him. Albert's fracas with the candidate was a plausible ground for this proposition, but the reputation of Moonshine was at so low an ebb, that had his name been mentioned three days before, Priminheere would have spurned at it. The idea, however, now struck him as somewhat new, and as he was aware that an opponent, however feeble, might answer the end he had in view, he decided on a journey to the house of Mrs. Moonshine, whose assent was considered necessary in the first instance before her son could be consulted on any subject.

Now it so happened that Mrs. Moonshine had been accumulating a treasure for some time past, in order to promote her idolized son to some eminence worthy of his condition. When James Priminheere, therefore, sought an interview with her, and made his proposal that Albert should immediately repair to the scene of action, she could not help considering the occasion as highly propitious towards the attainment of her object. Mrs. Moonshine was a lady whose character is by no means uncommon, but whose success in acquiring and maintaining the dominion over her son in domestic life was certainly an event of rare occurrence. Had Albert been endowed with the most ordinary intellect this step could not have been consummated by his ambitious, doating mother; but the village squire was too unconscious to feel his bondage, and too indolent to remonstrate had he been able to perceive it.

The preliminaries were soon arranged between the lady and Priminheere; and as the intended candidate was then absent from home, it was determined that the affair should be communicated to him in the first place by his mother, and that he should be despatched upon his honourable employment with the utmost speed he was capable of. But, perhaps unfortunately for the quondam Calvinist, he had not ridden far on his way home before he descried the object of his search loitering home according to immemorial custom. Primin-

heere was a prudent man, and cautious even to excess; yet, notwithstanding the agreement he had just concluded, he thought the opportunity now afforded him of addressing Mr. Moonshine too valuable to be lost, and accordingly he stopped his horse, and saluted the careless, lounging squire. The latter had but very recently emerged from the village alehouse, where he had been reposing in an arm-chair, maintained expressly for him in the chimney corner during the winter, and in a sort of recess at the upper end of the room in the summer. Carl Jones, the blacksmith, the official gentleman mentioned in the second chapter, an attorney's clerk, with three our four others, were following Albert very closely, having just concluded their afternoon repast at mine host's.

"You see that ere man," said Jones, in a most subdued tone, but sufficiently significant to reach all his companions. "I say, you see him, don't ye?"

Priminheere had just passed the party, having prevailed on Albert to turn back with him.

"Hist!" said the man of office.

"Oh! don't be afraid, don't cark, Mr.——. Mum's the word; I wouldn't hurt a hair of nobody's head; but —" here he spoke still lower—"what can he have got hold of our squire for?"

"I don't know," said the lawyer.

"It aan't for no good, mind ye," replied the blacksmith; "he never was any good."

"Pshaw, man, when a lawyer is present!" said the man of office jestingly.

"I didn't mention no name," cried Carl; "it's often in my mind that he do have a parley with Satan."

"A strange rise, indeed," observed the clerk.

"He thought nobody saw him on the morning of the duel, when he stood on one side all so sly; there was one who saw him though," said Jones.

"Who?—you mean——?"

"Mean what?" exclaimed the blacksmith to the official personage, who had obviously been indulging in an abundant potation. "Mean what, Mr. Solemn?" repeated Carl.

"Why—there was a heaven above," said the other with great gravity.

"Oh! ho, ho, ho!" roared Mr. Jones. "I saw him,

to be sure, standing in a corner in the field; and I can promise you I never forgot that cunning trick of his."

"That's he as was the Calvinistic preacher," said another of the company.

"No, no; he was never a preacher," said Carl; "you are a thinking of Mr. Fastenon, a very different kind of man. He as married Miss Hamilton."

"We'll get it all out of the squire," said the attorney's clerk.

"Over a quartern of the best to-night," returned the blacksmith. "Maybe we shall be able to do summut for him, if we mind," continued he, "for I can't abide that ere fellow."

"They certainly have been consulting together about something," said the official man; "I would give any thing to know what it is."

"Why, you're as bad as your wife," said the clerk; "don't be offended," added he, appeasing with his best endeavours the rising wrath of the excise man.

"Here he comes back again, I do think," exclaimed Carl Jones; "now we shall have it."

"Indeed, now I vote that you say nothing to him at present," urged the clerk, vehemently; "see how agitated he looks!"

"Not a word, not a word," was buzzed about, while Moonshine passed by. He appeared much disturbed, as the speaker had said, and paid no regard to his companions.

"There he goes—how wherry wexatious!" cried a little man who had contrived to creep into the society unobserved, and could no longer restrain his impatience.

"Who the devil are you, Sir?" exclaimed Carl: "What brought you into our company?"

But the intruder answered not, for he was content to slink off without further notice.

"Let us disperse now," said the clerk, "the presence of such a fellow as this ought to make us careful how we behave in the public way."

"This is a specimen of the insolence of the lower orders," observed the excisemen, as he prepared to obey the lawyer's advice, and with that the party gradually separated.

We can ourselves undertake to save the trouble of repairing to the village inn for the purpose of ascertain-

ing the business of Priminheere with Albert Moonshine. The evening assembly at that place were certainly allowed to participate in the news which the squire was willing enough to publish over his pipe, and Carl Jones slaked his curiosity not a little upon the occasion. But the object of the conference is not strange to the reader, and the dialogue which took place was neither tedious nor important to the event of this history.

Priminheere began by representing to his protegé that the borough which Mortimer was canvassing wanted a candidate of spirit to support its pretensions to independence, and that no man seemed better qualified to assert those rights than Mr. Moonshine. Albert, unassisted by the counsels of his all-inspiring mother, was at first doggedly silent.

"A man of spirit, as you undoubtedly are, Mr. Moonshine," said Priminheere, "instead of mixing with this wretched rabble, would be much more honourably employed in soliciting the suffrages of an independent body of electors."

"What wretched rabble, Sir?" asked Albert.

"These persons," was the answer of the great man who pointed towards them.

"They are persons," observed Albert, "whom I have known for many years, much better than their richer neighbours, I can assure you. Do you know, Sir, that I have fought a duel?"

"Certainly," answered Priminheere, somewhat surprised, though by no means disconcerted: "What then?"

"Why then,—Why then," returned Albert, "who knows whether I mayn't fight another? God forbid though!" At that moment the horrors of Captain O'Donogan and the fatal morning entered awfully into his mind, extinguishing, for the instant, the adventitious courage with which an extra glass had enlivened him.

"But what has duelling to do with your following your mother's advice, Mr. Moonshine, and going down immediately to canvass this borough?" said Priminheere.

"Didn't you abuse my friends just now?" replied Albert; "and besides, my mother has said nothing to me about canvassing."

"No—but she has to me, and, but for my meeting you here by accident, you would have heard the whole affair from herself."

"I don't know that," exclaimed the inflexible Albert.

"Did not Mortimer do you an irreparable injury?" said the other, who began to be somewhat irritated.

"You might as well say that you have done me an injury," answered Albert, "for you have married my dear Jane, if you mean that."

"Your dear Jane, indeed," muttered Priminheere; "Mortimer was the man who hurt both of us, and you felt it so much, that, as you say, you were compelled to seek satisfaction from him."

"Satisfaction! and what, as a religious man, can you have to do with satisfaction?" replied Mr. Moonshine, briskly.

Priminheere was unable to go the length of proclaiming that his alliance with the Church of England had rendered him amenable to the laws of honour, since he well enough knew the contrary.

"Listen, Mr. Priminheere," continued his inspired companion, with an energy he probably had never before felt, and which, assuredly, he had never practised. "I did once dislike this Mortimer, for he was my rival in love, but we fought, and the matter passed over, and with it all hatred and malice—and I hope for ever. I never will be guilty of pursuing an old enemy with such hostility as you seem capable of."

And, thus saying, he turned away, leaving his patron to enjoy the reflections incident to so sudden and unexpected a resolve.

Fortune, however, seemed disposed to befriend this insatiate enemy of Mortimer, when his utmost efforts had proved fruitless, as if he should be made to owe the accomplishment of his wishes to any other source than that of his own exertions. The events which tended towards the fulfilment of this will be detailed in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEWMARKET.

"An ordinary racer is known to go at the rate of a mile in two minutes."—GOLDSMITH.

MR. SOLAND was not disposed to be idle in promoting the settlement of the mortgage upon Byrdwood. He

took a very early opportunity of waiting on the attorneys who possessed the instrument which threatened that estate, informed them of the intention which his client, Mr. Mortimer, entertained of paying off the incumbrances, and requested that a speedy day might be named for the accomplishment of the business, and delivery of the writings. Dell and Head, the lawyers on behalf of the mortgagee, observed, that they were well acquainted with the alteration in Mr. Mortimer's fortunes, and seriously congratulated him on an event so unexpectedly agreeable, but they feared that the affair could not be arranged in a much shorter time than a month, as the mortgagee was at that moment residing abroad. Mr. Soland inquired the name of the lender, but could not gain a satisfactory answer; for he was informed that the mortgage had been assigned; and although Mr. Soland was politely invited to inspect the deed, yet as the assignment was said to have been executed at a distance, this information could not be supplied. Mortimer's agent testified some degree of surprise at this, for he reminded Mr. Head that an assignment was usually endorsed upon the deed, and that it was singular for the holders of the mortgage instrument to be in ignorance of the name of the assignee. But the lawyer on the other side explained, that in this particular instance there were two deeds, unavoidably so, and that the assignee was in possession of his own deed. Mr. Soland looked civilly incredulous.

"The history of the matter, Mr. Soland," said the other gentleman, "is simply thus:—myself and my partner were for some years employed by the late Mr. Mortimer, but an unhappy difference having arisen between us, that connexion terminated. In the interim, or somewhere about that time, Mr. Mortimer had occasion to borrow money, and the person who was willing to lend to him, and whose name you may see in the mortgage deed, was a client of our's. He sold his interest to a gentleman who is in the constant habit of residing abroad, and whose name we are really ignorant of. Instead of requiring the original deed which he might have had, he was satisfied with a copy of it, from whence an assignment was made, and duly executed, and thus it is that we possess the original instrument. Now the rich Mr. Priminheere is willing to buy the interest of the

assignee, or, more properly speaking, the equity of redemption; I beg pardon the interest."

"I comprehend, Sir," said Mr. Soland.

"And," continued the lawyer, "even, notwithstanding this change, he would be glad to treat on reasonable terms with the present Mr. Mortimer."

"That would be buying the equity of redemption," drily observed Mr. Soland; "but I have no instructions to make such an arrangement; indeed, on the contrary, I have reason to know that my client would be much averse to such a measure."—"Have you," continued the agent of Mortimer,—"have you, Sir, always had the possession of that deed?"

"Of that deed?" repeated Mr. Head, a little abashed at the suddenness of the question, "of what deed?"

"Merely of that mortgage deed?"

"Oh! why—yes certainly," said Mr. Head, a little comforted at finding that the question had no particular object.

"Has there been any payment of interest?" inquired Mr. Soland.

"The old gentleman paid some," replied the attorney, "but the present owner has been too wild and extravagant a youth to get rid of any of his incumbrances."

"But the interest, Sir?" returned Mr. Soland, noticing that his fellow-labourer in the law was either very much wanting in clearness of head, or that he had lost his presence of mind.

"Oh! no, Sir, no interest has been paid by young Mr. Mortimer. He has been deeply involved in gambling transactions, we believe, and has been engaged in duelling more than once, in fact he is not the man from whom we could have expected much upon these occasions."

"You have not told me yet how it came to pass that this deed was allowed to lie so snug in your office so long?" said Mr. Soland.

"That is a heavy story, Sir," was the answer. "You had better walk into the parlour, and take some refreshment, and I will try to explain it to you there."

"I am fearful," returned the other, looking at his watch, "that it will not be possible for me to stay any longer at present; but let us understand each other, Mr. Head, if you please," continued the attorney for

Mortimer; "at the end of a month from this day you will promise to be prepared with the mortgage deed and assignment, and all other papers relative to this affair, and I shall then be prepared to pay to the attorney for the assignee fifteen thousand pounds with interest and costs: now is that so?"

"That shall be done, if possible, Mr. Soland," said Mr. Head, perfectly confounded at the firmness of the speaker.

"Nay, Sir," resumed Mr. Soland, "but will it positively be done? Time, you know, is valuable to men in our profession, although of late there has been such an endeavour to depreciate it."

"Well, I think I may promise," at length exclaimed the lawyer on the other side with a smile; and Mr. Soland, finding that he must be contented with an assurance, the fidelity of which he could not help suspecting, took his leave.

The day of election for the borough which Mortimer had been conning over with so much earnestness, was now very fast approaching, and as no stranger appeared to contest the honour of the day, his return was held unequivocally certain. But whether fortune had decided on furthering the hostile views of James Priminheere, or whether a secret, well concerted and well kept, had now come to light at the appointed hour, it is quite true, that an abrupt and unwelcome rumour proclaimed a candidate at the last moment; and the report, as the Poet expresses it, picked up strength as it went on, till at length, another spawn of fame, more bustling than the first, arose, and the discomfiture of Mortimer was pronounced as sure as had been the anticipation of his triumph. In fact, (for it is useless to dissemble the truth of that which was at hand,) one of the old members, urged by his friends, had, after many importunities and numerous refusals, been prevailed on to present himself once more to his old constituents. He had been understood to have disobliged them by a particular vote which he had given on the Currency Question, and which had really produced very serious opinions to his discredit. His chance of recovering their regards had consequently been deemed quite hopeless, and even unto the eleventh hour had been abandoned in despair. But the youth and inexperience of the new candidate had been the subjects

of considerable discussion, and Mr. Soland's ability as a parliamentary recruiter was well known. It was therefore conceived, that a strong effort on behalf of the old representative might be successful, and might set all things right again, as some of his supporters were wont to say. Accordingly, to the great dismay of Mortimer, of Mr. Soland, but to the infinite joy of every one besides, not omitting James Priminheere, who could hardly credit the intelligence, the new candidate made a kind of triumphal entry into the borough. And the anger which had been kindled against him, seemed to have died away; the affair of the currency had been satisfactorily explained by the exertions and talents of friends; and universal acclamations burst from the throng in favour of the same man, who but a month since had been reprobated for his vote against cash payments. Mortimer, unpractised in the world's great arts, was speechless when he beheld this change in the fickle crowd; Mr. Soland took the opportunity of enlightening his mind concerning the vacillations of an English mob. And in the present instance, that mob consisted of a body of independent freemen, as doubtful as their own honour; and Mr. Soland, though he carefully concealed his suspicions, trembled at the symptoms of change which he witnessed. And it soon turned out, that this accomplished negotiator was by no means deceived in his surmise; for when, on the succeeding day, he began to muster his forces, in anticipation of an approaching contest, a most unpropitious alteration had taken place. All "fond records" of the last few weeks seemed in the minds of some to have been utterly blotted out; others, to whose recollection a past promise was made more vividly apparent, felt, as it were, a pain of memory, and shrunk aghast from the cross-examination. Even the solemn pledge was in a few instances neglected, and he who had sealed his decision to support Mortimer by the most earnest assertions, now gladly sheltered himself from its binding consequences, under the plea of inebriety. Indifferently as Mr. Soland was in the habit of estimating the words of scot and lot men, he was not prepared for so convincing a proof of their fickleness as the present. He was truly perplexed: instead of faith, he had found countless perfidies; and instead of veracity, falsehood frowned falsehood. Yet there was still a rem-

nant who had not bowed the knee to Baal; and the question with Mr. Soland was, whether he could venture to the poll with so small a number; for while he reflected, on the one hand, that a vast apparent majority appeared in array against him, and that many old friends were amongst the faithless host; yet, on the other, there was a chance of conciliating several, whose votes had not been positively pledged, and a forlorn hope, that some of the promise-breakers might return to a sense of honour, and redeem their doubtful character. He determined, however, to advise his friend to decline the contest, acquainting him at the same time with the exact proportion of votes, upon which he considered that Mortimer might confidently reckon. But that ambitious young man would hear of no such retrograde movement. He would go to the poll. He would sell the last shirt from his back. He regarded not the faithless violators of their word, nor even the defection of old Bravo himself. He was resolved on remaining steady, at all events, to the interests of those who had adhered to him amidst the general desertion; and Mr. Soland soon perceived that the officer's duty at the hustings, upon this occasion, would be no sinecure. But what could four hundred and fifty voices avail against two thousand? Neither eloquence nor perseverance could contend against such fearful odds, nor would that last resource of the defeated —a scrutiny, be of the least service in this case. Mortimer, therefore, who had buoyed up his spirits with the hope of a change, yielded to necessity, and relinquished the unequal conflict. A sense of delicacy towards his opponents, prompted him to do this, after a poll of two or three days, but not before a very considerable expense had been incurred. Yet he was severely mortified by this failure; the recollections of his first attempts at oratory, and of the success which they met with, were a source of infinite vexation to him. He resolved not to return for some time to Byrdwood, where he would be constantly liable to hear comments upon his defeat; and, in the first transports of his disappointment, he determined on repairing to London without delay. His sister, who had now returned into the country, remonstrated affectionately against this step; but the bitterness of Mortimer's spirit was in its freshness,

and, like many who had tried the same course before him, he hoped to extinguish his regrets by dissipation.

London, although not the gayest of gay cities, presents the new comer with the most luxurious and abundant sensualities. If it be wanting in the cloudless skies and cheering breezes of its neighbouring rivals, it administers, at least, the more solid and substantial enjoyments of man. But the unprotected and the thoughtless had better eschew this great metropolis; for there are wolves at every corner, like their animal relations, "bony, and gaunt, and grim," who count themselves ill-fed, if they fail to catch their nightly victims. Not that the poor adventurer is liable to such snares; he, a stranger in a strange land, may wander from Aldgate pump to Paddington, and neither gain a friend, nor raise an enemy. But when a more prosperous guest arrives, loaded with reputation, and easy in purse, he may do well to set a watch upon his evening haunts and morning saunterings. Mortimer had the advantage of being but scantily known, and therefore, while he carried about with him the materials of temptation, there was no killing fame to render him the prey of a sudden and inhospitable assault. If it were his fate to fall in with evil, it would, probably, be the consequence of his natural inclinations, rather than the misfortune of his inexperience. We must follow him to the great mart of commerce and pleasure, where he took up his abode at a hotel of renown, not a quarter of a mile from Tattersall's. Not having left his home for any other purpose than that of dispelling his mortification, it may be readily conceived that Mortimer had no particular pleasures in prospect, nor any especial objects to fulfil. And it was not a little singular, that, as in Paris, he had accidentally met with a gambling Colonel, so here, in London, a celebrated sporting character chanced to be in a neighbouring box on the first evening of his arrival. At first Mortimer paid very little attention to the unintellectual, and, in fact, unintelligible talk, which was carried on between the man of the turf and his companions. "Twenty to one against Priscilla; two to one against the filly; five to four against Sir Dick—fine animal though, rising five, out of Barbara, dam by Conqueror. She won the three-mile heat; badly rode though, and the Judge placed 'em wrong." Such language as

this, dull enough in the beginning to an unaccustomed ear, at length aroused the attention of the owner of Byrdwood, and, for want of other employment, he soon joined the society whose conversation had appeared so strange. There was such a pleasing attraction in this new scene, that, in the absence of some more urgent occupation, Mortimer concluded that he could not drive away care more effectually than by just dropping in at Tattersall's on the morrow; and he, accordingly, lounged to the betting-room, where the greatest activity was prevailing, for the Newmarket meeting in October was just at hand, and it was necessary that the engagements for all the running horses should be speedily arranged. It was three o'clock, and the room was unusually full. Every shade of character, both personal and moral, might be discovered within those classic walls. There was the noble, the commoner, the squire, the underling, the jockey, and the amateur; and there was the miser, the prodigal, the black-leg, the pigeon, the creditor, and the insolvent—the punctual paymaster, and the man who never paid except upon emergiencies. Mortimer might at present be called an amateur, and he had hitherto entertained the most inflexible principles of honour. But it required a command of feeling almost superhuman to resist the increasingly busy scene; such energy, such anxiety, such earnestness! Signals of greater deliberation could never be displayed in the days of the most public calamity. Here was a sallow-faced mortal solitarily speculating on the past, the present, and the future: ever and anon he would look up with an air of decision, nod his head with some slight communication, and note the result in a large morocco book which he held steadily in his hand. These entries were the memoranda of bets to an immense amount, and the writer valued his book as the repository of his honour as a sportsman. Then you might behold a tall, lean, lank-visaged person, with a nose as hooked and as keen as a famished eagle, sunken cheeks thickly studded with deep fissures, and jaws involuntarily starting from his wasted countenance. Countless wrinkles were undulating beneath his forehead, whilst his eye, peeping from behind its bushy promontory, betrayed the shrewd intellect which was triumphing within. He, too, was a party to the business of the day, and often glanced at

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his betting-book; but, unlike the other, he watched men more than things, and calculated the strength of those with whom he had to deal, with the same facility which he employed in reckoning the amount of cash he should be likely to win from them. This man did not fail to encounter the artless Mortimer, who was mixing carelessly amongst the company. Scarcely another in the whole assembly could have met that withering gaze without an instinctive shudder, for it most frequently betokened the loss of purse or credit; but the inexperienced visiter, like the lamb in the fable, felt no uneasiness at this crafty notice of a suspicious neighbour. At another spot might be seen the reverse of this ill-omened personage: a robust, florid, well-fed countryman, with a pair of cheeks as natural as the rose itself, tightly buttoned to the throat, and emancipated from the burthen of betting-book and pencil. He brandished a whip as independently as might be over each glossy boot, and now and then twirled his broad-brimmed priestly hat with a chuckle of good-humour which spread far and wide throughout his immediate circle. He, also, was "well known on the turf," and no loser either; for Nature, as if willing to reward his social and friendly qualities, had bestowed on him as sound a head as his heart was open and sincere.

"Take the long odds, Dick," said a strange-looking being at the lower end of the room, very little better attired than an ostler.

"I have been doubting of that same, by my honour, for some time," exclaimed Sir Richard, tapping his box.

"What are the long odds?" inquired Mortimer, who was standing sufficiently near to ask the question without impertinence.

"The long odds are the way to fortune, Sir," said the man of lean temperament, bending an anxious eye towards the stranger; "but you must bet, not take them," continued he, speaking with oracular deliberation.

"I should like to bear some part in this lively scene, I must confess," said Mortimer.

"Then you can't do better than bet four to one with me against Kennett; five to one against Jubilee; ten to one against Snoozy: and twenty to one against Priam," observed a little fellow, looking round very archly as

he spoke: "that is just the state of the odds just now; and if you have a mind to it, I'll book you directly."

"Softly, Tom," said he of the wizen cheek, "this gentleman is plainly a stranger to sporting chances at present; I would hardly recommend him to enter so early into the field."

"I beg pardon, my Lord," replied the other, subdued; "I was only anxious to accommodate a new guest, according to your Lordship's recommendation."

"And I should be disposed to recommend him not to bet at all," said the jolly personage, who had just moved towards that part of the room. Mortimer expressed his desire to bear some share in the speculations which were going on.

"You must have a keen eye and a sharp wit, Sir," exclaimed the same gentleman; "it's not always easy to be right when we know we are right, here." A good-humoured laugh smoothed the effects of this stinging satire; and having received many other portions of advice, Mortimer looked out a spare column in his pocket-book, and entered into a variety of discordant engagements, with the full zest which a tyro is prone to. Even the shrunken peer condescended to honour him with a corner in his common-place book; and having now found out at least a temporary relief from idleness as well as disappointment, Mortimer returned to his hotel under the pleasurable influence of an excitement, which novelty is so capable of creating.

Having no employment in London, he had very little difficulty in deciding upon a journey to Newmarket, where he might personally witness the issue of his engagements. Scarcely any persuasion became necessary on the part of his new associates, to induce the young sportsman to accompany them to the scene of action; and he started with as slight a knowledge of the ground, as a man who might suppose that Cambridge Heath, just beyond the city gates, was but a stone's throw from Newmarket. Here, again, he was dazzled by the newness of his enterprise, and delighted with the gaiety which prevailed. But he was not yet "very deep," as the phrase runs; and though he should lose every bet he had made, the disaster could not make any considerable inroad upon his fortune. Many of the horses against which he had laid the long odds, lost, according

to the customary event of such wagers, but he became confident upon this gleam of success, and continued to back large sums against other unpopular racers. On the grand day an immense crowd had collected, as usual, to see the splendid running of the favourites. Laura, Chestnut, and Potemski, were the horses most in repute amongst the veterans of the turf. Heavy odds lay against Tumbler and Careless. Several had paid forfeit; and many had no further notice than the interest of their owners had promoted. The jockies were ready, and the steeds were led forward in the first condition, all rejoicing in the fulness of their high mettle. As Laura approached, every eye was turned towards her; the graceful bendings of her neck, her back clothed with strength and sleekness, the mighty prowess of her action, drew forth the admiration and raptures of all around.

Mortimer was overwhelmed by the applause which she met, and imagined that he beheld the model of elegance; he doubled his bets, already no trifle, upon her. And now the utmost silence prevailed; each eye was straining for the signal to start. The course was cleared at full gallop, and the reckless whip flew right and left, to the heartfelt terror of all inconsiderate strangers.

"They're off!" cried a voice close to Mortimer. And so, indeed, they were, eight in number, trampling over the yielding sod with sylph-like gracefulness. Laura had not yet taken the lead, but lingered a short distance behind some of her competitors, as if restrained by her rider.

"Now Powell! now Chiffney! now Wilkie!" burst forth from the motley group, encouraging the jockies of their own favourites.

"They've turned," cried another voice.

"Now they're coming to the stand!" exclaimed Mortimer, with an accent of triumph, observing that Laura was first. At this moment she tripped and fell. A groan was heard on all sides. Careless now dashed forward, followed almost neck to neck by Chestnut; it was a fearful chance. Each rider redoubled his exertions, his bridle lying loosely on his horse's neck. The game was desperate between the two; now they reached the goal, and darted in with the speed of a steam-engine. "We must wait for the judges," coolly observed a veteran, to Mortimer's impatient inquiry concerning the issue of the

contest. But he was already in despair; he felt that he could not be deceived; his favourite, Laura, had been led from off the field, her rider being mortally injured. The judges now announced their decision; they placed but two, 1. Careless; 2. Chestnut.

Careless was accordingly adjudged the conqueror. The betting had been very rapid at the close of the race. Like the intense anxiety which was wont to prevail when a twenty thousand pounds prize remained at the bottom of the wheel till the final drawing of the lottery, so the most earnest eagerness was abroad as the winning horses advanced towards the stand.

"There," cried a person, throwing a bundle of notes on the ground, "Take them, Sir." Mortimer stooped and picked up the roll. He had met with a party just before the running, who offered very heavy long odds in favour of Chestnut, and he had universally met the wishes of these adventurous gamesters. The parcel, containing notes to the amount of five thousand pounds, had been tossed down apparently in a huff; so that the abrupt mode of settling the loss passed entirely unnoticed. But Mortimer soon found, that, notwithstanding these winnings, he had a most heavy balance to make up. On casting up his debtor and creditor account, the former preponderated rather beyond the amount of a sweeping ten thousand, for he had betted as freely on Laura as he had taken the bets on Chestnut. Still he reflected, that his winnings were more than five thousand, so that, at all events, he would be but five thousand out of pocket, and with that idea he consoled himself for the moment.

A stranger is viewed in the different transactions of life with an eye particularly opposite to that with which we view an acquaintance, or a person of established repute. So it is on the turf. An old stager makes up his betting-book at his leisure, consults his debts and credits at convenience, and, before the settling day, has probably taken efficient measures to reduce the one and augment the other. Not so with an unknown speculator, or a decoyed pigeon. Such as these are expected to redeem their pledges very presently, and to give immediate confirmation of the justice of their pretensions to associate with the parties who have admitted their names into the books of gain and loss. To be sure, the

lean-visaged peer was not one of those who felt anxious for a speedy settlement, for his piercing vision had marked out his debtor as a man in whom confidence might be placed, and, besides, he had won but a small sum on this particular score. But there is an infinite variety of characters at Newmarket; and some of Mortimer's heaviest bets were lost to those who, although they seldom keep any part of their gains, are, nevertheless, exceedingly eager to have as few debtors as possible. It became necessary, therefore, that the rich rouleau of notes should be unfolded, and that approved cheques should be given for the residue.

Mortimer was quite ready to accede to these proposals, and he counted forth the notes with nearly as much rapidity, though with more good humour, than they came into his possession. The receivers, however, of these securities seemed to be men who had been duped more than once in the course of their experience; and one, in particular, (for the business was arranged in the presence of all,) viewed his payment with no very favourable eye. He looked at the notes, and then at Mortimer, then held the paper up to the light, and fixed his sight intently and portentously upon the signature, till, at length, his mind flashed decision, and he exclaimed, "Sir, this is a forgery."

"A forgery, Sir!" cried Mortimer, as much disturbed as the indignant winner.

"Yes, Sir," was the answer of the other, who now peeped into the hands of his companion, and examined the notes which they had just received.

"And these are forgeries too," he vociferated; "they are all forgeries—what a scandalous trick!"

Reprobation of this unhandsome treatment now passed swiftly from mouth to mouth, to the irrecoverable confusion of Mortimer, who was as yet wholly incapacitated from even stammering out the truth.

It was not until it was proposed by his disappointed assailants to inflict summary vengeance upon him, that he retrieved any portion of his senses.

"For God's sake, gentlemen, be a little more merciful and considerate," cried he; "I didn't forge the notes."

"No, but you have uttered them," was the unanimous answer.

"They were paid to me by some sharpers just now,

and I shall lose five thousand pounds: Gentlemen, be a little patient, I am a stranger here."

"So it appears, but you shan't take us in for all that," said one of the party.

"His cheques will be forgeries, said another.

But Mortimer had now recovered the courage which a consciousness of innocence always brings back sooner or later, and perceiving the class of society into which he had fallen, he instantly repelled with resolution the charge which had been imputed to him. His manner soon convinced his accusers of their error, and they soon agreed to accept drafts upon a banker in London for their demands; and, moreover, to endeavour to discover the perpetrators of the cheat which had been so adroitly played off. But this lenity, together with the apologies which were offered him upon the execution of his cheques, gave Mortimer but little comfort in comparison of the evil which had happened to him. He retreated from the spot, shamed, disgraced, and despoiled; enraged at his own folly, and absolutely furious against those who had imposed this bad paper upon him. He collected the notes, tied up the obnoxious roll, and thrust it into his pocket with a full determination of punishing the offenders with the utmost rigour of the law. But they, probably, were at this time thirty miles distant, and their dupe was under the necessity of abandoning all hope of redress; contenting himself with the profitless meed of compassion which was tendered him on all sides. Overwhelmed by contending regrets and resentments, he repaired to a dinner to which he had been invited, a heart-broken and conscience-stricken guest, and, almost for the first time, sought relief from misery in abundant draughts of wine. The party with whom he was now associated, and to whom, for the most part, he had been recently introduced in London, were universally sportsmen, although of a rank far superior to those from whom he had just been disentangled, and, with scarcely an exception, they were men of honour. And, which was the more singular, when we relate the result of that evening's amusement, not one of them had any predilection for cards, nor encouraged gaming of any kind, except their favourite occupation of the Turf. It was, therefore, not a little strange and surprising, and perhaps eventful for Mortimer, that

a Mr. Jones, one of the quietest of companions, should suddenly advantage himself of a pause in the conversation, and exclaim,—"Seven's the main; what say you to a turn at hazard?" The temptation was as seducing as it was abrupt and even unpremeditated, and coffee being now ordered, the dice-box was produced, together with those perilous guests which so often decide the fate of acres. Accordingly, seven was the main, and the party went to play heartily and confidently. There was the usual luck upon such occasions; heaps of gold diminished in one place, and rose in little hills upon another. Suddenly, again, there would come a sweeping tide, and the whole surface of the table would be changed for the second time. Then you might see, in another short minute, a mountain of money accumulating with rapidity, and upon the place where piles of wealth but lately stood, a spot of desolation.

Mortimer, even when untouched by liquor, would not have been the man to have regarded such play with indifference, much less to have cautiously withdrawn from the assembly. But flushed as he was, and desperate besides with disappointment and defeat, he soon caught the genius of the fascinating game, and embarked largely in the chances which were momentarily despoiling some, and enriching others. And, like many luckless gamesters, he grew more infatuated as fortune declared herself against him. He did not even win at first, as some do who are ultimately destined to the worst reverses; but from the beginning was steeped in losses, which his companions forbore to check or compassionate, because of his supposed wealth.

There is a time when the victor tires of conquering, and though he find perpetual victims to attack, he palls at the sight, and retires from sheer satiety. Often has the player, ten times bankrupt, returned with recruited hope and purse to a deserted table where not one has remained to vanquish him. Willing to tender the wreck of his wasted fortune to the pillager, he has been compelled to retreat in silence from the scene of his disasters, for want of an adventurous hand to rid him of his last resources. It was far past midnight when Mortimer found that his companions had gradually declined in numbers until at length he was left alone with his host. As eager for the die, amidst his heavy losses, as when

he began, it was not without a bitterly regretful feeling when he saw that his chance of redemption was past. In vain did his host endeavour to sooth his wounded spirit; the calamities he had met with had entirely sobered him, and he had sunk from a condition of daring expectation into the most abject wretchedness. Scarcely sensible, he gazed upon the scene of his ruin, then seized the dice and strewed them involuntarily before him; then again looked upon the deserted board with a vacant stare, tortured by sorrows and compunctions unutterable. Nature at length revived, and, as if anxious to avail himself of the interval, he suddenly started up, bade his courteous and sympathizing friend good night, and hurried from the house.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS.

"Oui, quand on veut tenir une affaire secréte,
Moins on a de temoins, plus la chose est bien faite."
CORNEILLE.

"THAT is so, I can assure you, Mr. Soland; he is little less than a professed gamester. I should be sorry to speak to his prejudice, but I feel myself bound to say as much if you ask me my opinion on the subject." These were the words of James Priminheere, who had met with Mr. Soland after the latter had been making a visit at Byrdwood, where he, of course, did not meet with Mortimer. Mr. Soland was slightly known to Priminheere, and being aware that he was Mortimer's neighbour, had made a few inquiries, for the purpose of satisfying his own mind as to the payment of the election expenses, which had not been light. But the expressions abovementioned did not apply to Mortimer; they were spoken of another resident in the county, whose name had been warily introduced by Soland, in order that he might point his subsequent questions with greater plausibility.

"And you know Mr. Querles of these parts?" asked Mr. Soland.

"Perfectly," was the answer.

"And Sir James Waters?"

"Intimately."

"And Mr. Griffin Griffin?"

"Perfectly."

"And I presume that you are acquainted with a gentleman whom I have seen in London—Mr. Mortimer?"

Priminheere cast his eyes on the inquirer as if to learn the object of making that particular demand of him; he was convinced in a moment that Mr. Soland had some especial view in putting the question, and observed, indifferently, that he knew Mr. Mortimer well as a neighbour.

"And is that all?" asked Mr. Soland.

"Yes!—why? why do you ask?" said Priminheere, with a slightly increased action.

"I had a particular reason for so doing," observed the lawyer gravely.

"What reason? What information can I give?" hastily exclaimed the other with rising emotion.

"There certainly was a solid reason for a question which might be deemed impertinent on some occasions —but, in fact, some private concerns"—Priminheere turned pale in spite of all his efforts—"some private concerns between myself and that gentleman"— Priminheere revived a little—"required some explanation as to his habits of life; and as he is a young man, I feel desirous of giving him all the advice in my power."

"Certainly!" returned Priminheere very briskly; "and it is the part of a Christian man for you to act thus. But, nevertheless——"

"Yes! nevertheless—" said Soland, observing that his companion had broken off abruptly—

"Nevertheless—but pardon me, Mr. Soland," said James, "let me ask of you the object of your inquiry?"

Mr. Soland hesitated a short time in answering this demand; when Priminheere added, "That he had no wish to look into matters which did not concern him, but that as he had been interrogated so pointedly on a subject of some delicacy, it was but natural that he should be anxious to be acquainted with the drift of the application.

"You seem to be so candid, Sir," returned Mr. Soland, "that I think I may venture to say, that as my expenses in conducting Mr. Mortimer's election for the borough of—of—".

"I know the place well, Sir," interrupted Priminheere, "and that you were his agent upon that occasion, and that there was an unexpected and unfortunate failure."

"Should we go on with the case," resumed Mr. Soland, "and try the right of the voters on the other side in the House, further law charges will necessarily arise."

"My dear Sir," observed Priminheere—"you must pardon me for interrupting you; I ought to have known the whole business at once, but I was so dull. You want to gain some intelligence as to the solvency of this young gentleman?"

"That assuredly was, dear Sir, the object of my troubling you with questions rather more particular than usual."

"And I can affirm to you, Mr. Soland, that I am also much interested in this gentleman's capability to meet his engagements. I know that you are also employed to settle a mortgage transaction for him, and I will tell you how I am concerned in the business: I am the assignee of that mortgage."

"Why, Dell and Head, the solicitors for the mortgage, told me"—exclaimed Soland, with surprise—"that the assignee lived abroad. You have not the assignment, Sir, have you?"

"Yes, I have the deed of assignment," replied Priminheere; "I cannot divine what Dell and Head could mean by telling you that the assignee was abroad. There must be some mistake."

"Such was the fact, I assure you, Sir," replied Mr. Soland.

"I was abroad, probably, when the assignment was executed," said Mr. Priminheere.

"No, that does not clear the matter up," observed the attorney; "for the gentleman who acts on your behalf, alleged, as a reason for delaying the settlement of accounts, that the deed was beyond sea; and I could not help remarking upon the singularity of the circumstance, that the deed of assignment should not have kept company with that of the mortgage."

There was a strange overspread of paleness on the cheek of Priminheere when he heard this explanation; but whether it rose from a feeling of anger against his lawyer, for having misled Mr. Soland, or from some

other cause, the latter gentleman did not observe it, or, at all events, took no notice of the change.

"To return to Mr. Mortimer, Sir," said Soland, "whom this little digression has shielded for a little while—"

"Mr. Soland," said Priminheere, after musing for some time, "what Dell and Head meant is this: the mortgagee made, or intended to make, an assignment to a person who immediately went abroad, and the deed was taken away by that person unsigned, by mistake, I believe, upon which I contracted to buy the mortgagee's interest."

"Your lawyer will clear that affair up to our entire satisfaction, I make no doubt," said Mr. Soland.

"As for Mr. Mortimer," hastily exclaimed Priminheere, whose temper seemed to have suffered considerably as the conversation proceeded, "he really is in so uncertain a condition, that the sooner we can enforce our respective demands against him, the better. He is now gone to Newmarket, where his passion for gambling will, I question not, occasion him to lose every shilling. Were it not that I have a pretty strong hold upon Byrdwood, I should, I confess to you, be under some apprehension."

It was now Mr. Soland's turn to look pale, for he had no less a sum than seven thousand pounds at stake, having placed implicit confidence in the honour of a young man who had so many favourable appearances to recommend him.

"I should be truly sorry to injure my neighbour," continued Priminheere, "but, as in the case of the professed gamester, who was mentioned in the beginning of our conversation, one must stand upon the watch against people who are liable to the strangest reverses of fortune."

"Your claim is decidedly prior to mine," cried the lawyer, absolutely frightened.

"It may not be too late, nevertheless," coolly answered the other, "to gain, at least, a portion of your own. Every man has a right to reclaim that which is his."

"Most assuredly," rejoined Soland. "I am sincerely obliged to you for this hint, and I quite acquit you of any desire to prejudice an acquaintance. You could not have acted otherwise under such circumstances."

And thus, amidst a profusion of courtesy and of secret misgivings, he took his leave of Mr. Priminheere.

Notwithstanding the loss of Mortimer's election, and the consequent indifference with which people usually regard a defeated candidate, Priminheere could not forbear fresh acts of hostility against the unfortunate possessor of Byrdwood. Yet, although he had just gratified himself by an important communication, which could not fail to embarrass and injure the man whom he so much disliked, the discourse of Mr. Soland had evidently touched some tender point upon which he was more than ordinarily sensitive.

In a very few days after this dialogue between James Priminheere and Mr. Soland, Mortimer returned home. But, unlike the ordinary class of discomfited candidates, whose noisy career and clamorous addresses are insufficient, in the absence of further topics of agitation, to save them from a deserved oblivion, Mortimer found, that although his exertions had availed him but little amongst a promise-breaking crowd, they had been highly appreciated in his own neighbourhood. The bells of the village-church struck up cheerily to welcome him back again; smiling faces and greetings, which cannot be mistaken, awaited him on every side; had he been the universal benefactor of the country, more honour could not have been shown him; and this indeed was no empty compliment. Mrs. Mortimer and her amiable daughter had laboured for years to discharge their duties to their surrounding neighbours; that-day showed how well their task had been accomplished. The manners of the poor towards the gentry who live in the midst of them are a certain index to the conduct of the great ones. Hypocrisy may breed a momentary adulation, interest may cause an obedience prescribed by power, but the display of affection by those who have not more than their daily crust, is the offspring of unrestrained liberty. Deeply mortified as he had been, humiliated as he now was by calamity, and menaced by distress, Mortimer yet felt to the fullest the pleasures of the hour. Free from gloomy anticipations of the future, regardless of fickle friends and cold-hearted associates, and forgetful of the evils which that giant poverty, is so prolific in creating, his spirit became wedded to joy from the very moment he beheld happi-

ness in others. He had started from Newmarket the most disturbed of fortune's outcasts, had desponded on his journey like a man who has drunk the dregs of the sorrowful cup, and as he approached the house of his fathers, his mind misgave him that the beloved spot would be an abiding place for him no longer. Despair had magnified the imagination of his losses, and far from calculating the remnant of his resources, he shrank from thought as from a desperate foe who would assault him. And beyond doubt there was some reason for the foreboding conjecture, for election contests are not starved, and lawyers, excellent men as they may be, must not go unfee'd. His mortgage too, with its accumulation of interest, must be quickly satisfied; and with respect to the amount of his speculations on the turf, they were enormous, much indeed beyond the ordinary venture of the most careless stripling. Lastly, there was the sad sequel of the hazard-table; so that if fortune had once taken a delight in crowning his boldness with success, she had now amply shown him in return the inveterate faithlessness of her disposition.

But the cheering groups of the village; the outstretched hand pressing forward on all sides; the gladdening notes of the merry, merry peal; the distant outbreaking of the ancient towers of Byrdwood—all these were delights more intoxicating than the deepest carousal, and at their earliest coming the foul fiend fled away.

Sincere, too, were the salutations of his mother and sister, whose budget of news was not suddenly exhausted; nor did Mortimer, on his part, forbear to recount the things which he had seen, sparing, however, all mention of his losses. Could Mortimer have remained thus happy, he might have valued but slightly the calamities which had passed; but the day of reckoning had arrived, and a bitter penalty was at hand if he were unprepared to meet it.

Priminheere, who had kept himself closely shut up during the triumphant return of his neighbour, lest he should see the deeds of rejoicing, and be cut to the heart by their sincerity, had not in vain insinuated his opinions into the mind of Mr. Soland. So uneasy, indeed, was that experienced practitioner, that he employed a person to give him instant notice of Mortimer's arrival at Byrdwood, an event which he purposed to follow up

without delay by requesting a speedy arrangement of his account. Now no man was more fully aware than Mr. Soland of the extreme inconvenience as well as annoyance of making a sudden demand for more than six thousand pounds, of abruptly asking for it at the house of a country gentleman, bearding him as it were on his own estate in the midst of his tenants. After some consideration, therefore, the lawyer deemed it by far the more prudent step to cause his bill to be duly presented in the first instance, and then to wait upon his debtor after the first emotions of surprise or regret should have subsided. For there are certain feelings which invariably take place in the mind of every man whose misfortune it is to be a debtor, at the moment of receiving an extensive demand; and however tempered they may be by fortitude and patience, a wise creditor makes a rule to absent himself at those times. Mr. Soland accordingly determined (with what happy foresight we shall see presently) to proceed to Byrdwood in a day or two after his mission should have been accomplished. The packet of evil tidings was consequently sealed up, in compliance with this intention, and safely reached its destination, with a staggering sum total at full length.

It had been determined on, the very day when this unpleasant messenger arrived, that Mortimer should receive an address from the neighbouring inhabitants, who highly honoured and applauded the popular principles which he had professed at the late election. Old Bravo, who had become ashamed of his base desertion of Mortimer, Carl the blacksmith, and several other men of independence, were extremely active in promoting this act of respect. It was arranged that a deputation should proceed to Byrdwood House, that a speech should be delivered upon the occasion, and that the address should embody all the chief reasons on the part of the electors, for having tendered Mortimer their suffrages. Some discussion took place as to the personage from whom this congratulatory composition was to flow. Secretly, old Bravo was desirous of being the organ of these opinions; for no man had read more of currency, and poor laws, and reform, and foreign businesses, than he. But the majority of those who had a right to be consulted, were in favour of a more polished orator.

Old Bravo, whose friends had not been slow in proposing him, was highly complimented for his learning, and the depth of his political researches; but his known antipathy to the rules of grammar, together with the uncivilized use which he was wont to make of the eternal quid he bore in his mouth, rendered him ineligible in the consideration of these fastidious electors. After many fruitless proposals, all eyes were turned on Albert Moonshine, whose disinterested conduct in rejecting the advances of Priminheere had been the subject of great approbation, and to him, therefore, it was decided to apply. Not but that old Bravo remonstrated against the choice of an *unsensible* dolt, as he termed the heir of Moonshine Hall: this declaration of incompetency availed the old soldier nothing, for Moonshine was a gentleman, "and a great gentleman was Master Albert, too," said Carl Jones; so that Mortimer was required to fix the day, and Albert was obliged to learn the part allotted to him, together with all the qualifications necessary upon the occasion. Never had the young squire abstained so long from his customary chair at Boniface's as at this juncture, for his mother had duly impressed her son with the importance of his function, and as the duty he had to perform was entirely foreign to the habits of his life, his labours were proportionably excessive.

The important morning at length came, and the electors were assembled at an early hour. It had been put to the vote, and carried, that the procession should advance through the village, with flags and music, in spite of Mr. Priminheere's threats, that the party must hold themselves responsible for a breach of the public peace. Utterly regardless of these admonitions, which old Bravo had assured them were contrary to the law and the constitution, the deputation moved boldly forward, amidst the vociferating cheers of the accompanying throng. But they had hardly attained to the heart of the village, when James Priminheere rode up with several magistrates and officers in his train, and demanded the occasion of the disturbance.

"No disturbance at all!" cried old Bravo, with a voice of thunder.

"That bullying will not convince the magistrates," coolly observed Priminheere.

"Mr. Moonshine," continued he, "I am sorry to notice you at the head of this gang."

"Gang! did you say?" roared out Bravo.

"Officers," said Priminheere, quite unmoved; "you must now do your duty; you must secure this gentleman," pointing to Moonshine, "and that man with the tobacco in his mouth." The last was old Bravo.

"And, officers, now I will tell you your duty!" exclaimed Bravo; "and that is just to leave me and this gentleman alone; you touch us at your peril."

Great agitation now prevailed amongst the throng, which was increasing, and pressed upon the officers; and no sooner had the latter advanced towards Albert, than an universal and menacing sound of indignation burst forth in every quarter.

"Down with the false Calvinist! down with the new-fangled Churchman!" exclaimed one more daring than his fellows.

"Seize him," vociferated Priminheere, turning rapidly round to detect the offender.

"Seize him for what, I should be glad to know?" cried the old soldier; "a man has a right to speak in this wide world."

The officers had now possessed themselves of their prisoners, who surrendered without resistance, and were conveying them through the village, amidst the incessant yells of the multitude; when old Mr. Stedfast, a retired attorney, came out of his house, in great alarm, and bustled towards the magistrates, by whom he was instantly recognised. This gentleman had acquired a sufficient fortune to warrant him in enlarging an ancient dwelling hard by, adding a flight of handsome stone steps to it, and creating a neat circular gravel walk, with a grass-plot and an hour-glass in the middle. His opinion was always esteemed sound on constitutional questions, as he had shown upon the occasion of quartering some soldiers in the county town during the assizes; and as he was a foe to uproar of every kind, he now hastened forth to question the reason of that day's disturbance. Without heeding the tattle of a hundred misleading gossips, he applied himself to the justices, who were riding onward in triumph, and having obtained a faithful history of the transaction, declared, without ceremony or respect of persons, that the capture

of the deputies was most illegal. The blood of the old veteran Bravo seemed to be quite aroused at this announcement, and he eagerly pressed forward to shake hands with the defender of his rights. But Mr. Stedfast calmly informed the magistrates, "that he was no friend to turbulent meetings, as they well knew, and that if he had heard any thing on that day indicative of a riotous disposition, he should have said, 'Let the law take its course.' Here, however, was an assemblage of men, claiming the birthright of every Englishman, namely, meeting for a constitutional purpose. They had a right to go up with an address to the defeated candidate, and he regretted that the peace of his native village should have been so unreasonably broken."

"We break the peace?" exclaimed Priminheere; "take care what you say, Sir."

"Now stop, Mr. Priminheere," observed Colonel Honeyblood, one of the magistrates; "for my part, I always thought that you were going too far; and after what Mr. Stedfast has been kind enough to tell us, I really think, considering his years and experience, that he must know what is legal and what not."

"And so you will desert the cause?" inquired Priminheere.

"Our cause is no other than our duty," rejoined the Colonel. "What say you, gentlemen?" he added, addressing himself to the other justices.

"It is a difficult question," observed one of those appealed to, "particularly as we have gone so far: if it had not been for Mr. Stedfast's opinion, I should have said we ought to have gone on; but for my part, I think we had better not proceed now without further advice. What say you, Sir?" continued the justice, addressing his neighbour.

"Why, faith," exclaimed the worthy man, "I should hardly have thought that a man of Mr. Priminheere's reading would have got us into such a scrape as this; but I confess, that I see the matter in the same light that you do now."

"And you, Sir?" asked Colonel Honeyblood of the remaining magistrate, "may we have the benefit of your opinion?"

"Oh! I think with the majority," said the gentleman appealed to.

Upon which the Colonel courteously turned to Priminheere, and said, that it was clear now that they had been rather too sanguine, and that the prisoners must be released.

"Very well, gentlemen, this must be upon your own responsibility," answered Priminheere, urging his horse at the same time rapidly from the scene of action.

"Now, I hope that you will all return quietly to your own homes," said the Colonel; "and, gentlemen," he added, addressing the deputation, "if you will take the advice of a friend, you probably will give up this expedition which has made such an uproar to-day."

"It is you who have made the uproar," vociferated Bravo, as the Colonel departed with his friends, discharging at the same time a volley of substantial abuse against the crest-fallen magistracy.

"What are to be the damages of false imprisonment?" cried the veteran again with an air of triumph, as he waved his hand for the procession to move on. "Three cheers for Mr. Stedfast, my lads."

Instantly the welkin rang with acclamations in honour of the constitutional lawyer, who, however, had retreated already from the field of honour, having slipped unperceived through the crowd.

Mortimer was prepared for the mark of attention which was designed him, and received the select party with great urbanity. But the spokesman of the day was by no means so ready with his lesson. It is charitable to suppose that the novelty of his situation operated more powerfully upon him than the danger from which he had just escaped. The people assembled to do Mortimer homage, had now surrounded him with the mien of men who delighted to honour, and all eyes were cast upon the Squire, the chosen mouth-piece of their flatteries. But Nature would not stand Albert's friend, and he could not borrow at that awful instant the wit and intellect of old Bravo. Something he knew must be done, and that very presently; but what could be effected without speech or memory, and neither the one nor the other helped the Squire in this pressing hour of need. An ungracious silence reigned. Mortimer, overflowing with politeness, lent a condescending ear to the expected effusion; the group around stood waiting with patient dignity; and now Moonshine was just elevating his voice

with the word, Sir, dropping from his lips, when a loud and heartfelt, Oh! burst from some rude visiter in the rear. This was no other than old Bravo himself, who perceiving the disaster which he had anticipated, vented forth his feelings without the hesitation of a second. This horrid ejaculation, too, happened to fall contemporaneously with whispers of Hush, hush! which broke forth from Moonshine's immediate neighbours at the instant of his raising the syllable, Sir.

Hopeless as the intellectual condition of Albert was at the commencement of the interview, this most unkind and ill-seasoned hint entirely chased away the slender force which might yet have rallied and redeemed him from disgrace. But the last chance had fled, and he now stood gazing on vacancy, bereft of recollection and childish from apprehension.

It is impossible to say how long this mortifying scene would have continued, had not the old soldier walked boldly up to the seat of audience. Pulling forth his quid from a mouth whose varied hues were not extremely pleasing, and spitting at the same moment on the carpet beneath, to the infinite horror of his companions, he delivered an address of congratulation to Mortimer without tripping in a syllable, and having finished a string of fluent compliments, amongst which the most knotty points of politics took the foremost rank, he quietly resumed his everlasting tobacco, and retreated within the centre of the circle. Mortimer's reply, uttered without premeditation, was elegant though pithy, and at its close the party were invited to a repast which had been fondly anticipated by several as the most useful part of the ceremony.

Flushed with the congratulations which he had received, and emancipated for a time from the pains of reflection, Mortimer took courage, after the departure of the deputation, to open a sealed packet which had been forwarded to him from the office of Messrs. Soland and Co. He knew the nature of its contents sufficiently well, but the immense calamity which he had sustained at Newmarket had admonished him, when too late, of his desperate condition, and the parcel remained till now unopened.

A few hundreds more, he thought, as he hastily detached the seal. Within were several delicately folded

papers, (the aggregate being confined by an ample circle of red tape,) each filled with words, and dates, and figures, and headed by the appalling denomination of Roger Mortimer Esq., debtor to Messrs. Soland and Company.

The unhappy object of these fell demands darted his eye from page to page, and sum to sum, and still the everlasting "Brought forward" appeared with ruinous precision to mark the rising debt. Tired of his task, Mortimer hurried to the grand total, and there beheld his imagined hundreds multiplied into thousands, with an accuracy which the carefulness of the composition forbade to question. He staggered back upon a chair, and threw the ill-omened papers on the floor.

Nearly half an hour had elapsed before Mortimer was aroused from the stupefaction which had overwhelmed him. He was then awakened by the entrance of his sister, who affectionately besought him to acquaint her with the cause of his distress, for the signs of sorrow sat heavily on his countenance—"Six thousand, nine hundred and fourteen pounds for conducting an election! —my dear Mary," cried her brother, starting up, and gathering together the scattered bills. "Alas! I ought not to have told you." His sister remained silent, and Mortimer paced the room with excessive agitation.

"Be patient, I entreat you, Roger," said Mary Mortimer after a short pause, "don't alarm my mother."

"God forbid!" exclaimed he; "but look here, look at these enormous charges—so sudden—so unlooked for, so ruinous—I am distressing you."

"Roger, you do distress me," said the weeping girl; "but we must learn to submit to the chastisements of Providence."

"My misconduct, at least the misconduct of the attorney in making such a demand as this, cannot be charged on Providence, my dear Mary," said Mortimer. "The attorneys fatten on these cruel spoils, my dear sister," continued he, assuming a more bitter tone; "see what an index of plunder!" and he held up the obnoxious papers: "I cannot contain myself. What is this?"

"My dear Roger, I must retire a little," said Miss Mortimer; "this news has been too heavy for me to bear at once."

"What chicanery!" exclaimed he, scarcely noticing

the departure of his sister; "let me see." "'Perusing documents concerning the borough of W., by your direction, when I discovered that the right of election was in the freemen of the borough paying scot and lot, 3*l.* 3*s.*' I gave no direction," continued Mortimer, talking aloud. "'Attending you, taking your instructions concerning the sending of circulars, when you resolved on presenting yourself to the electors, 13*s.* 4*d.*' Thirteen and four pence! when he had a dinner at Byrdwood which might have pleased a king. 'Attendances at the Royal Oak, the Old Commodore, and the Chequers, at which places respectively you addressed the electors, 15*l.* 15*s.*' The unfortunate night when I harangued the freemen, and their cheering deluded me into a fatal hope of success. 'Attendances,'—I have no patience—attendances without end. 'Paid your share of erecting the Hustings,' don't let me look at it. 'Coach-hire of John Smith, a non-resident freeman, fifty miles, &c., 10*l.* 10*s.*' 'Ditto John Brown, 10*l.* 10*s.*' 'Ditto Francis Thompson, 10*l.* 10*s.*' 'Ditto, ditto, ditto, ditto,'" vociferated Mortimer, in a rage; "Tremendous, unauthorized! 'Writing you a letter to inform you that the election was proceeding unsuccessfully, and requesting you to state whether you were willing to decline the contest, 5*s.*' I will read no more, the dittos take up twenty folio pages, and I am a ruined man;" again ejaculated the owner of Byrdwood. "Very smooth he was, with Dear Sir, and Good Sir, and soft persuasions, and flatteries, and see the result. Oh, fool! fool that I have been! My poor mother and sister, you will be again beggared through my imprudence."

He again hurried from side to side with increasing impatience. The repeated knocks of a servant outside at length raised his attention.

"Come in!" said he, in a voice far above the accustomed pitch.

"Mr. Soland, Sir."

Mortimer stood in silent amazement; the domestic was fearfully abashed.

"Desire him to walk up." The master's words gurgled in his throat as he pronounced them. The servant gladly closed the door to do his bidding, but Mortimer abided on the spot where he was, with his eyes fixed on the entrance. Passion struggled fiercely within him,

and venturesome indeed it would be, to tell of his first impulse. Footsteps were now heard ascending the great staircase. There was still an interval for reflection, and Mortimer felt, in spite of his anger, that he must appear subdued, though his heart shrunk from the sacrifice. "I must be calm," said he, with a countenance black as night. A cold sweat broke over his forehead as he made this resolve; it was the kindly effort of nature, and in an instant the door opened to introduce Mr. Soland.

But how changed was the aspect of that polished lawyer! How strange the features of a man who, but very recently, had been Mortimer's assiduous friend! How unlike the creditor who hopes by a well-timed courtesy to tempt his debtor to immediate payment!

Thus it was that the lawyer met once more his parliamentary client, the former sufficiently prejudiced by the mysterious hints of Priminheere, the latter bridling, at the risk of suffocation, emotions of anger which he felt it right, as well as politic, to quell.

"Good morning, Mr. Mortimer," was the lawyer's first cold salutation. "Good morning, Sir."

The slightest shaking of hands accompanied these formalties.

Mortimer could not long restrain his anger. Holding the dreaded packet between his finger and thumb, he was the first to commence hostilities.

"Look at this, Mr. Soland," said he. Mortimer displayed the dangling sheets. "Here is an account for an inexperienced young man, who has been betrayed into an electioneering contest by an acquaintance in a packet-boat."

"Indeed, Sir, this is strange," said the lawyer. "I challenge an inquiry into these papers. I aver their veracity and faithfulness. Surely an ambitious young man must pay for an overweening desire to become a member of parliament. Did I not beseech you to withdraw before I sent for the out-voters?"

"That is true, certainly."

"Have you read the bill carefully through, Sir?"

"No, indeed, Mr. Soland. What unhappy victim, think you, would take such a step?"

"Then, Mr. Mortimer," said the lawyer, "you have not acted either fairly or decently by me." Mr. Soland would have added the word gentlemanly, but there was

a certain fire in the eye of his companion which deterred him, angry as he was, from any such risk. Passion has its climax, and in wordy tumults, where blows and violence cannot result by reason of the rank and condition of the disputants, wrath, like the spent fires of a volcano, must after a while decline.

"Mr. Soland," he resumed, "I will read your bill at my leisure."

"Thank you very much, Sir, replied the other. "I have come expressly from London for the money, and now I am to return home while you are quietly to read an account of long standing at your leisure. No, no, Sir, that's too bad; that won't do."

"What is to be done then, Mr. Soland?" replied Mortimer.

"The account must be immediately settled, Sir," said Soland with an air of firmness.

"I have no objection to pay a reasonable demand, Mr. Soland."

"The demand is altogether correct and reasonable, Sir."

"There we are at issue," said Mortimer.

"Am I to understand you then, Sir," returned Soland with impatience, "that my bill is to remain unsettled?"

"I refuse certainly," said the master of the house, "to give away nearly seven thousand pounds for business with which I am entirely unacquainted."

"Then, Sir, I wish you good morning," replied Mr. Soland; and he was about to quit the room without ceremony, when Mrs. Mortimer, who had heard louder words than she was accustomed to, came in to learn the cause of the discussion.

Mr. Soland's countenance betokened decisive anger, and Mortimer stood erect with a look of defiance which might have befitted imperial dignity.

"Mr. Soland, I request that you will be seated," said Mrs. Mortimer. "Nay, Sir, I must insist."

Mr. Soland took a seat.

"My dear Roger, be calm, continued his mother.

"Madam, I am calm," said young Mortimer: "If any one here is angry, it is Mr. Soland."

The matter in dispute was now repeated in the presence of Mrs. Mortimer, who begged of Mr. Soland

that he would allow time for an investigation of the accounts.

"Madam," said the lawyer, "on Thursday next there is an appointment fixed with Messrs. Dell and Head, for the purpose of settling your son's mortgage—"

"Which is a perfect mystery to me, Sir," interrupted Mrs. Mortimer; "because the late Mr. Mortimer was not in the habit of borrowing money."

"That may be so, Madam," observed Mr. Soland; "but to return, if Mr. Mortimer will be ready on the morning of that day, I shall be satisfied."

"Well then, if it must be done," said Roger Mortimer—

"It must be so, indeed," reiterated the inflexible Soland.

"It shall be done, then, and the money shall be paid; decisively it shall," returned Mortimer.

Now, notwithstanding that Soland had undertaken an especial mission from London for the purpose of regaining his election expenses, so seriously had he been prejudiced by the observations of Priminheere, that he deemed himself a certain loser of half his disbursements, to say the least. To do the lawyer justice he had produced a sufficiently moderate demand, that is to say, in the eyes of those who are familiar with such imposts; for the inexperienced portion of the community, to whom the per centages of lawyers, doctors, and surveyors appear enormous when disclosed in the volume of a long bill, cannot be allowed to counteract the usages of centuries, merely because the amount is staggering. Mortimer might have avoided the terrors of the accountant, by smothering his ambition, or appealing to the generosity and independence of a free people. By resorting to the protection of a lawyer he had no one to blame except himself, and no conduct to find fault with, save his own indiscretion. However, there was now an instant alteration in Mr. Soland's manners and feelings towards the family at Byrdwood: indeed, a thorough reconciliation was apparently accomplished, through the mediation of Mrs. Mortimer, between her son and the agent, the pledge of its sincerity being on both sides understood to be the payment of all arrears on the following Thursday.

CHAPTER X.

A DEED OF DEATH.

"When you durst do it, then you were a man;
And, to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man." MACBETH.

THURSDAY, the day of the great reckoning, was now at hand. However unwilling he might hitherto have been to look into his wasted resources, it now became imperative on Mortimer to provide for the lawyer's bill, the mortgage money, and the accruing interest. He shut himself into his chamber early in the morning, and with a heavy heart drew forth pen and ink and paper. Figures were his aversion at all times, but to be compelled to range them on the losing side of the account was a task truly burthensome and sorrowful. The effort, however, was made, and when the assets were duly marshalled, as the Chancery lawyers are in the habit of saying, there lacked a sum of five thousand, or it might be seven thousand pounds. Again and again, the units and cyphers were put in requisition, but those unerring guides, although twisted and varied in every direction, inflexibly gave the same results, namely, a sad and hopeless deficiency. Intoxicated with flatteries, and content in the society of his family, Mortimer never imagined that his finances had fallen to so low an ebb. He was sensible enough of his Newmarket losses, which occasionally caused him moments of bitterness, but the misfortune of being unable to fulfil his engagements had never entered his thoughts. Now the scene was laid open, and insolvency stared him in the face. It was no longer a struggle with the slight of treacherous friends, the wandering nods of former acquaintance, and the heartless spurnings of fashion. For these evils Mortimer had prepared himself, since he well knew the consequences of an unpropitious visit, such as his had been, to the turf and the gaming-table. But here was desperate, reckless, irretrievable ruin.

Unable to cope with the miseries of his discovery, he hastened to the breakfast room, where his cheerless eye and pale countenance would have attracted more notice, had not his mother and sister attributed them to the ensuing business of the day.

His evidently sad condition passed accordingly without much question, and he again retired to his room a prey to every melancholy reflection, and awaiting with terror a summons to attend the indefatigable Soland. There was no room for consolation upon this head. Other men might fail in keeping their appointments, and other occasions might be productive of delay; but a London lawyer, with seven thousand pounds in prospect, and one too of Mr. Soland's punctual habits, could not tarry. Mortimer lay under the extreme pressure of time and circumstance, and as the hour advanced his agitation grew also. "Byrdwood must go,"—said he to himself, in a frenzy of despair, "and we must be outcasts. My mother and sister dependant and penniless—Impossible!" He struck his forehead with the anguish of a desperate man.

"The forged notes; Oh God!" A gleam of hope darted across his mind. It was a moment of weakness, of temptation, of triumph for the angel of darkness. Mortimer rushed to his bureau, frantic, as if in search of hidden treasure. The notes were safe; they lay in the same packet which had been thrown on the ground at Newmarket, and in the same position as when he folded them up. Though not superlatively executed, they were such as would elude an ordinary eye. They had been detected only by men, long accustomed to the arts of those wily practitioners who had duped Mortimer. He seized them with eagerness, and counted their fallacious cost. Five thousand pounds neither more nor less, and five thousand pounds would relieve him from embarrassment and disgrace. He could privately reimburse the loser afterwards, could make up the damage done to the public in a hundred ways, could atone for the offence at his leisure, and pay a retribution of a thousand fold. He thought not of death, nor of ignominy, nor of calamity to others; the spell was too strong, for instant deliverance was the premium for crime; abasement and poverty alone remained for surly virtue. Conscience strove in vain to do her office, and he who, but a few days since, would have tossed the cheating paper into the street, now viewed it with the eye of a miser, and placed it in his pocket-book as a jewel of the first value.

Still the fear of detection was not entirely absent from his mind, for he hesitated much whether Mr. Soland

should have the benefit of his newly found treasure; or whether it should be paid to the lawyers for the mortgage, or whether part should be given to the former, and part to the others, or, indeed, whether he should not hasten to London after the settlement, and pay the forged notes to his bankers. At length, after deliberating upon his fatal purpose, he deemed it most secure to let the mortgagee receive his five thousand pounds and scarcely had he come to this resolution, when it was announced that Mr. Soland had arrived.

If fortune had been disposed to lend Mortimer the least aid, there was a fair opportunity on this day for her services. The weather was more than usually inclement, the roads in a ruinous condition as far as horses and vehicles were concerned, and Mr. Soland's favourite mare had fallen lame on the previous evening; but a loan from an obliging friend soon remedied the last accident; and at a crisis like this, there was hardly a lawyer in the metropolis who would not have bade defiance to the elements and the roads.

The first matter of business was the liquidation of the election accounts, and this being very speedily despatched by a cheque for the desired sum on the one hand, and a receipt in full of all demands on the other, an adjournment to the office of Dell and Head, for the purpose of settling the mortgage according to appointment, was proposed and agreed to.

Mortimer and his agent soon arrived at the office of the attorneys above-mentioned. They were fully expected, and after passing through an avenue of railed closets and raised desks, where the sharpest wits are concocted and the dullest wits made keen, they found themselves in an inner room, where the heads of the firm received them with much civility. James Priminheere also, who was seated at the table, rose upon their entering, recognised Mr. Soland, and bowed to Mortimer. Some common-place compliments of the day then followed, and, subsequently, a pause of some minuets, whilst the lawyers were collecting and looking out the various deeds and papers. Priminheere took up the newspaper, and carelessly threw his eye over the larger prints. Mortimer surveyed every corner of the apartment, having summoned as much courage to his assistance as his nature was capable of, and that was not inconsiderable.

Over the chimney a law almanack was appendant, containing the fullest particulars of terms, holidays, saints' days, Old Bailey Sessions' times, solar and lunar variations, together with a variety of other useful matters, and an ample print at top of the New London Bridge. Still higher up was an engraving of the great Lord Mansfield, corresponding with a similar plate of Lord Chancellor Thurlow, at the opposite end of the room. Large iron boxes filled with deeds, and inscribed with the names of the owners, reposed in niches on all sides. Many a secret tale and strange hatching of things lay buried there. Papers, innumerable as eastern locusts, lay scattered abroad in bundles of infinite variety, some half a yard in height, the product of a twenty years' suit in Chancery, others just peeping from their pigeon-holes, the embryos of future litigation. The statutes at large, with other imposing volumes of gigantic size, crowned the scene.

Mortimer was still employed in contemplating these insignia of office, when an inimitable "ahem!" announced that the transactions of the day were ready.

"The mortgage money 15,000*l.* and the interest 4,500*l.* at four per cent. and a little bill of costs 419*l.* 19*s.* 11½*d.*—does that statement agree with the paper which we have given you, Mr. Soland?"

These words introduced the business: they were Mr. Dell's most silvery tones, and might almost be said to have vied with those of the great Chief Justice, whose portrait hung above them.

"Quite right, Sir," returned Soland, with a voice and manner of absolute composure, accompanied by a bow fully equal to its captivating original in the steam-packet.

"The mortgagee abroad, and the assignee,—this gentleman," said Mr. Dell, pointing to Priminheere.

"Upon that subject," said Mr. Soland, "a doubt has arisen in my mind, which I am sure that you can clear up satisfactorily."

"Mr. Priminheere the assignee of the mortgage!" exclaimed Mortimer with astonishment.

The earnestness of the speaker excited surprise, and rather disconcerted Priminheere, but Mr. Soland immediately proceeded.

"The circumstance is, doubtless, attributable to mistake," said Mr. Soland; "but Mr. Head certainly in-

formed me that the assignee of this mortgage was abroad, and that Mr. Priminheere was willing to buy the equity of redemption."

"To buy the equity of redemption!" interrupted Mortimer.

"But," continued the lawyer, "Mr. Priminheere, on the contrary, as well as you, Mr. Dell, acquaints me that he is the assignee, which, you know, is an entirely different matter."

"I am very glad to have had an opportunity of affording you a proper, and, I hope, a satisfactory solution of this business," returned Mr. Dell; "the truth is, that my partner led you into an error. Mr. Priminheere made you acquainted with the real fact, which was, that the mortgagee intended to sell to an assignee who went abroad taking with him an imperfect deed by mistake. Then Mr. Priminheere purchased the mortgagee's interest, and I believe he took the mortgage deed home, and undertook to procure the signature of the party abroad. That is so, Sir, is it not?"

"I had a friend at that time," replied Priminheere, "to whom I was enabled to confide the deeds with convenience to all parties, and with the consent of the lawyers I sent out the proper documents, and——"

"You made your title complete, Sir, under our sanction," said Mr. Dell.

"Just so," observed Priminheere.

"The circumstances now appear to be clear and natural enough," said Mr. Soland.

"Although not very neighbourly," said Mortimer.

"I think that we may proceed to business now," said the agent. "You see, Sir," continued Soland, addressing himself to Mortimer—"You see, dear Sir, that the matter which appeared to be so strange was the separation of the two deeds from each other—like husband and wife, they ought always to be together—and, even now I can hardly understand why these gentlemen should not have had the assignment.——" Mr. Soland stopped for a moment, but there was no answer. "However," he went on, "there might have been reasons for that, or it might have occurred by accident or——"

"Go on, if you please," exclaimed the impatient Mortimer.

"Well, then, as I was saying, there is now nothing

strange in the transaction, because here is the assignment, duly executed and ready to be placed in the hands of my client." Soland accompanied this speech by holding up the deed in his hand.

"Oh! I beg pardon," he resumed, "this is the mortgage deed: where is the assignment?"

"I was hardly aware," said Priminheere, "that the assignment would be wanted. It is my security."

"But as soon as you have received your money, dear Sir," said Mr. Soland, with a most appeasing air, "the security will no longer be necessary; it will then become the property of my client, Mr. Mortimer."

"Surely he will be satisfied with the mortgage deed," said Priminheere. "What more can be necessary."

"You have surely brought it with you?" asked Mr. Soland.

"I am desirous of doing every thing openly and fairly, and, therefore, possibly I may have done so," returned Priminheere; "but it does not follow from thence that I am bound to deliver up the deed."

"Ask your own agents, if you please, dear Sir," said Soland with some emotion.

Some little consultation now took place between the parties on the other side.

"It seems," said Mr. Dell, "that Mr. Priminheere entertains a groundless notion of the value of this instrument, and, probably, Mr. Mortimer might have no objection to oblige him in this instance: there will be the mortgage deed itself."

"Really, Mr. Dell," replied Soland, "you are too familiar with the course of business not to know that this is a most unusual application."

Mr. Dell courteously bowed assent.

Another consultation then ensued between Priminheere and his agents, when Mr. Head inquired privately, whether he had not, in fact brought the deed. Priminheere admitted that he had.

"It must be produced and surrendered up, Mr. Priminheere, I assure you, if you are desirous of receiving this money," said Dell.

"Even if Mr. Mortimer were willing to waive his right," observed Mr. Soland, "I should feel it my duty to insist upon the delivery of such an important instrument as this."

James Priminheere then retired for an instant, and on his return placed the important deed upon the table, adding with a careless air, that he could not have imagined that the delivery of the assignment could be of so much consequence. Yet he gazed with extreme earnestness upon Mr. Soland, who slowly unfolded the deed, and upon Mortimer also, who looked upon it with unfeigned astonishment. Mr. Soland took the precaution of comparing it with his abstract, and examined it with the minutest attention, holding it to the light as if to read it the more easily, and carefully watching the signatures, whilst Priminheere regarded him with signs of fidgety impatience.

"It is of no consequence," said he; "it will be thrown into some deed-box, and utterly forgotten."

"No, Mr. Priminheere," said Mortimer, "the circumstance of my father's embarrassments is so marvellous, that you may rely on it, it will not find its way into oblivion quite so easily. It shall stand the test of a hundred eyes and opinions first."

"But you have no doubt, you have no objection to pay the money?" asked Mr. Soland.

"Oh, no—none," replied Mortimer, with apparent indifference; "however, perhaps the deed could be left with my agent, and the matter postponed for a short time."

"No," was Priminheere's decisive answer.

"I will agree to this, though," said he, after some hesitation, "you shall leave 2000*l.* on mortgage, and then I shall retain the deed."

"But why retain the deed at all?" said Soland.

Mr. Dell facetiously smiled at this, and remarked, that it was impossible to convince Mr. Priminheere of his mistake on the subject of that instrument.

"Let 5000*l.* remain," said Mortimer, "and I will accede to your proposal." Mortimer just then reflected, that here was an auspicious occasion for his escape from the commission of a forgery.

"I should recommend your settling the affair at once," said Mr. Soland.

"Five thousand pounds!" exclaimed Priminheere, his avarice struggling with the policy which he had attached to the retaining of the deed. "Five thousand!"

"Not less," observed Mortimer, who began to feel

the value of the proposal, and trembled exceedingly. The lawyers, on either side, remained silent during this interval of deliberation. Their business lay with the parchments and papers, not, as they well knew, with the acts and intentions of their clients.

"Something more than 2000*l.* then, and less than 5000*l.*" said Priminheere, fixing his eye on Mortimer with intense anxiety.

"No, impossible!" returned Mortimer, with a manner increasingly hurried.

"Impossible, is that impossible?" said Priminheere, grasping the deed with his right hand. "Think, Mr. Mortimer, you will have disencumbered your estate of the greater part of its burthens,—and—and—" he added, in a whisper, "if you will but comply with my wishes, with respect to this deed, I will be your friend for ever."

"Or my enemy, I presume," answered Mortimer, noticing the determined air of Priminheere.

"You are right, Mr. Mortimer,"

"It is a fierce alternative," said Mortimer, "but I must be firm."

Priminheere again let go his grasp of the deed of which he had instinctively possessed himself, and rested his elbow on the table as if to devise some new scheme.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Soland, "are your arrangements completed? I am desirous of returning to London to-night; I have given my opinion on the subject."

"Oh, yes!" returned Priminheere, "we have not been sufferers for want of your good offices."

"Will you be content, Mr. Mortimer," said Soland, disregarding the tone of irony with which he had been addressed, "to leave this money as Mr. Priminheere requests?"

"I have decided I will not," said Mortimer; "I will not yield, unless 5000*l.* are reserved."

"And I, on my part," cried Priminheere, "am not bound to yield either;" and he flung the deed across the table, with a violence which betrayed his loss of temper.

"There," said Mortimer, throwing his bundle of notes upon the table at the same time; "the affair is now settled."

Priminheere showed no symptoms of assent, though Mortimer looked steadily at him when he spoke thus.

"Soland," resumed Mortimer, handing a cheque to

him, "be kind enough to write the sum due upon that draft, deducting 5000*l.* which lie here upon the table, and I will sign it."

Priminheere still appeared to linger, as though he were desirous of another negotiation.

"The affair is concluded, Sir," said Mortimer, with an air of decision, "and Byrdwood is mine." It was a declaration from which there could be no appeal.

The customary signatures and receipts were then despatched with all due ceremony; Priminheere's agents were presented with the notes and cheque; and Mortimer's friend, on his part, was not backward in accepting the mortgage securities, and amongst them, of the famous assignment deed.

Priminheere spoke no more, and Mertimer had his reasons for maintaining as convenient a silence as he could. Both parties were heartily anxious to be relieved of the fearful restraint under which they had so long laboured; and even the lawyers seemed more than usually pleased to be rid of each other's society.

Mr. Soland returned with Mortimer to Byrdwood, whence, after a substantial repast, he set off for the capital. But, before he quitted the mansion of his host, he could not help tendering his counsel and assistance, in case they should be wanted.

"You have acted honourably by me, Mr. Mortimer," said Soland, (who, though fond of the main chance, was a kind-hearted and sincere man,) "and should any circumstance happen to perplex you, I shall be happy and willing, as a friend, to offer you my best services."

Mortimer expressed his obligations for this burst of spontaneous regard, which was the more praiseworthy on the part of Mr. Soland, because he foresaw the difficulties into which it was more than probable his host would speedily be plunged.

As to the rest of the party, the lawyers of Priminheere remained in their office, cogitating over fresh intricacies, and devising new schemes for the advantage of their clients, as well as their own personal benefit. Priminheere himself departed immediately, and returned to his own place.

CHAPTER XI.

WARNINGS.

"Take heed! have open eye."—SHAKSPEARE.

THREE or four days had passed since the settlement of the affair of Byrdwood, and Mortimer fondly hoped that the bold step he had ventured upon would be free from danger. He often trembled, notwithstanding these sanguine hopes, and his family could not but perceive with wonder, an alteration of manner so foreign to his character: for in spite of the expectations he was now indulging, an anxiety, gloomy and constant, wasted his once sprightly countenance. Conscience would intrude her displeasing sallies, and fear would ever and anon invade his solitary hours. But time was passing on, and matters went on as usual; expenses, indeed, the source of future distress and embarrassment, were rising up; still, of these Mortimer thought little, for the present danger had, for the moment, banished all other considerations.

A week, at length, elapsed, (seven days of terror for Mortimer;) ten days, a fortnight, a month, and his dreams of security began to brighten. If he should have escaped, how glorious, he imagined, was the chance! how critical the instant when the deed was done! He was preparing for a journey of some weeks to London; and, previously to his departure, resolved to make a few visits which the disturbed state of his mind had occasioned him hitherto to neglect. These calls, however, were deferred, from various accidents, to the day before his leaving, and on the following afternoon he had settled to quit Byrdwood for the present. A man who is not quite on good terms with himself, is apt to be full of fancies; and so it was that Mortimer deemed his reception at the houses where he went, not by any means so favourable as usual. It was the more singular, he thought, because it was well known that he had paid off the demands on his estate; and he was, moreover, young, unmarried, and, as far as the public knew, independent. Still he felt dissatisfied and uneasy, and before his return home he took considerable pains to comprehend the meaning of this change. But in passing through the village, he met Priminheere, who, surveying him

with a stern, and, to one conscience-stricken, a terrific glance, passed on abruptly without further notice. At another time he would have questioned the suddenness of this manner towards a neighbour; but the events of the morning had worked powerfully upon an abashed spirit, and Mortimer, for the first time, slunk away disheartened. Indeed, he was so much struck with this last incident, that he shut himself up in his apartment for a considerable time.

Mortimer had scarcely left home, as we have just mentioned, when his sister was informed that a gentleman was desirous of seeing her immediately. The servant added, that it was with difficulty he could restrain the stranger from following him, so earnest and importunate was his claim to be admitted. It was instantly agreed that Miss Mortimer should see this urgent visiter, and he was accordingly shown into the room where the young lady and her mother were. He was no other than Charles Priminheere. Mary Mortimer started and turned pale, and Mrs. Mortimer regarded him with an air of much distance, for her daughter had disclosed, without reserve, the events which had happened in London.

"I am conscious how strongly an apology is necessary," said the young barrister; "but I am sure that Miss Mortimer will acquit me of any intention to intrude upon you unnecessarily."

"I would presume as much as can be in your favour," said Miss Mortimer.

"My dear Miss Mortimer," returned Priminheere, "you may rely on it, that I should not have appeared here without some very serious reason."

"You alarm us, Mr. Priminheere," said Mary; "can any thing have happened?"

"No, no; do not frighten yourself, I beg of you," replied the Barrister; "nothing has happened yet."

"You lay a great stress on *yet*, Mr. Priminheere," observed Mrs. Mortimer: "what news do you bring us?"

"No bad news at present; pray be calm, Mrs. Mortimer," said Charles Priminheere, "and allow me to speak with your daughter in private.—It is not upon any subject connected with myself, I assure you," continued he.

"There cannot be any thing, Sir," said Mrs. Mortimer, "which I may not be at liberty to know as well as my daughter."

"My dear Madam," said Priminheere, "there is no intention on my part to keep you in the dark; but the communication which I wish to make, I cannot, in justice to my own feelings, mention in the presence of more than one person."

"Then it must be something in which you have a personal concern," returned Mrs. Mortimer.

"No, Madam, on my honour," repeated Charles Priminheere.

"Why may not my mother hear it?" asked Mary Mortimer.

"Miss Mortimer," said Charles, "this discussion is becoming very painful to me. I stand, as I shall be able to convince you, if you will lend me a private audience, in an extremely delicate situation. Give me the hearing I require, and you shall know all; but if you will persist in denying it, I regret, I am indeed sorry to say it, but I cannot speak further. It is about your brother, Mary," said he, addressing the younger lady, in a low voice.

"About my brother! there can be no harm in acceding to Mr. Priminheere's request, my dear mother."

"It is of great importance that you should know the business," continued Charles, "and time is valuable."

"Heavens! my brother," cried Mary, with much agitation. "Mother, I must presume upon your kindness. Mr. Priminheere, I will go with you to another room."

"And where is my son, Mr. Priminheere?" said Mrs. Mortimer, equally disturbed.

"Be content, dear Madam," replied Priminheere, "your son is perfectly safe; no accident has happened to him;—and the information which I am about to give your daughter, is solely for his future good; perhaps, I may add, his security."

Mrs. Mortimer, upon hearing this, observed, that she would retire for a short time; but no sooner was the season for explanation allowed him, than Charles Priminheere became greatly agitated.

"You will not be surprised, my dear Miss Mortimer," said he, "at the disturbed condition of my mind, when I tell you, that my own brother is as much the subject of this conversation as Mr. Mortimer."

"Indeed! no duel, I trust!" exclaimed the affrighted girl.

"No. I am doing you a wrong by withholding my intelligence so long: and yet I hardly know how to break it to you. I was apologizing for the apparent uneasiness under which I labour. Your brother, however, is safe, let me repeat it, and there is no duel, nor any chance of such an event. But—"

"But, what?" said Mary Mortimer.

Priminheere's distress increased, in defiance of his exertions to command himself; and it was not until he had been urged more than once to reveal his secret, that he ventured to speak again.

"You must beware of my brother," said he at last, with an air and tone of earnestness which convinced Miss Mortimer that he was serious.

"How! in what respect?"

"Perhaps this information will be sufficient," said Charles; "you know how painful it is to talk unpleasantly of a brother."

"Indeed I do," replied the young lady; "but I am in the dark—sadly in the dark," continued she.

"Well then, let me advise you," said he, "to urge your brother's instant departure for London, as soon as he returns, without the delay of a quarter of an hour; and again, let me press it upon you, let him avoid my brother."

"But," returned Miss Mortimer, with calmness, "although it is, indeed, very kind, very kind, on your part, to have said this; perhaps, your news may be premature; you may, (it is possible,) you may have mistaken the meaning of some circumstances. Could you not be more explicit?"

"Miss Mortimer, I am not mistaken; I pledge myself to the literal accuracy of my statement to you."

"But my brother is obstinate and brave, and he will either remain in the country to face the danger, should we tell him, or we must be silent on the subject, and allow him to depart at his own convenience."

"He must be told, Miss Mortimer: he stays at his peril. Must I tell more? Will you not act as a friend, and spare me further?"

"Mr. Charles Priminheere, I conjure you if you really have any regard for me, to say a little more. Speak

upon the nature of the threatening mischief. You desire that it should be averted from my brother, I am sure. Your silence will be fatal to him."

Priminheere took out his watch. "Time is indeed valuable," said he. "Do you, Miss Mortimer, expect your brother's speedy return? I would, painful as the case is, speak to him myself."

"His return is uncertain," said the lady.

"Then, my dear Mary," returned the other, "I must forbear to say more; you have had a testimony of my integrity in sacrificing, as you know, the chief hopes of my life in conformity with your wishes; and I now declare to you without reserve, that unless Mr. Mortimer starts from this neighbourhood immediately on his arrival, his life and liberty will be in danger. Farewell!"

Priminheere hastened from the room, whilst Mary Mortimer, with difficulty maintaining the presence of mind for which she was so remarkable, disclosed the milder half of her tidings to her mother, and awaited with fearful forebodings the return of her beloved brother.

He came at length, but so much harassed and disturbed that, as we have already acquainted the reader, he went directly to his own apartment, and remained there inaccessible to all for a considerable time; for, having gained his private chamber almost by stealth, he speedily closed a heavy iron door which his father had placed there for the sake of occasional seclusion, and then retreated within the inner apartment. Here he had leisure to reflect on the startling incidents he fancied he had witnessed; but it was not until he had filled a little silver cup with some choice Kirchenwasser, and had nearly sipped the whole of its contents, that he ventured to tax his thoughts upon the subject. They were at first as gloomy and dismal as terror could inspire upon any occasion, and every speech and action of the day returned into his mind with the most depressing recollections. He had even concluded at one time that the forgery had been discovered, and that officers were actually on their way to arrest him. Frightened and nearly beside himself, he was resolving to fly, when another cup poured out with speed and drunk as hastily, gave a fresh action to the heart, and revived the faltering man. Such were the charms of this last effort,

that Mortimer seized another full cup with equal eagerness, and the tide of his reflections changed in an instant. Each melancholy consideration gave way under the auspices of a more cheering imagination. Doubts of every kind met with an easy explication; a dozen grounds for fear vanished amidst the brightening spirits which now flowed in, and in a few minutes he held the very chief event which had disquieted him in no better light than a mere delusion. The coldness of his morning visits had unquestionably arisen from long absence on his part, or some private trouble in the domestic circles. He had met with no absolute affront; and as to Priminheere, what more natural than that such a man should survey him with some degree of dislike after the disappointing scene at the lawyer's office?—Then, the revelation of his fraud was now becoming more and more unlikely; he felt that he had been hypochondriacal when he gave way to such idle apprehensions, and lamented that he should ever have fallen into such an abyss of cowardice. In the transports of his triumph, he swore an oath that he would hasten to London and redeem his fortunes, and that his gains should be applied to atone for the deed he had committed. Full of these intentions he threw open the door of his retreat with a higher heart than he had possessed since the fatal morning of the forged notes, and met his sister, who was impatient for his appearance, with an elevated and rejoicing air.

"My dear Roger," said she, "let us step into this room for a moment. I have something of importance to communicate to you."

"To be sure, sister," returned Mortimer; some, news about a marriage, I suppose."

"No—brother—a concern of much more consequence; it affects you very nearly."

"Does it?" exclaimed her brother. "Tell me, tell me, Mary; let me hear it."

"But pray be calm and serious, Roger," said Miss Mortimer, "for you are to set out for London without delay."

"To set out for London, Mary! Why, I am going to-morrow; surely you don't want to get rid of me before?"

"Well, but you must set out to-night."

"Who says that I must?" demanded Mortimer.

"Charles Priminheere has been here, brother——"

"The devil he has!" exclaimed the other.

"Brother, you are not accustomed to swear," said the astonished girl; "something most strange has happened to you, and if you will not hear me, your life will shortly be in danger. Priminheere has been here to caution you against his brother, and he says that you must set off for London instantly. The horse is ready now by my orders. Come, now, do take advice."

"But what reason? why, Mary?" cried Mortimer, half suspecting the truth, notwithstanding the enlivening effects of the potions he had swallowed.

"Mr. Priminheere gave no reason."

"Then," said Mortimer, "it's a hoax altogether. Do you know, Mary, that I have been a prey during the whole of this day to fancies of every sort? Charles Priminheere has been here for some other purpose."

The smile with which her brother accompanied these words, both mortified and offended Mary Mortimer.

"Brother," said she, struggling with vexation and terror, "I can tell you that this is no trifling matter; you have not been used to treat me in this slighting manner."

"And God forbid that I ever should!" said he, kissing her affectionately; "but this is a mere vagary, an 'unreal mockery.'"

"Have you done nothing to be afraid of?" said the unsuspecting girl.

"No, nothing."

Mortimer still throve under the supernatural influence of liquor.

"Nothing?" said she, fixing an inquiring eye upon him.

"Nothing," again repeated her brother.

"Then I am content," said Mary.

"That is to say, nothing which can affect you my dear."

"You spoil your former assurance by that qualification," said Miss Mortimer.

"I have been a loser at Newmarket to some extent, and I have found some difficulty in paying off the mortgage," observed he, with apparent indifference, but, in fact, no longer able to quell the clamours of his conscience.

"You have paid it honestly?"

"How can you question it?" said he.

"Have you indeed paid it?" she again inquired with earnestness.

"I have," said he, with a tone which imparted conviction.

"My mother has often said that she had a small fund, which, in case of distress, that is, extreme distress, she intended to place at your disposal."

"Then," said Mortimer, "let her keep it sacred for her own comfort. Don't mention it to me again; I might be tempted; I am too weak to bear such an offer."

"Why, there is no extreme distress at present," said Mary.

"Only that I have scarcely a shilling left in the world."

"Oh, Roger!" exclaimed the girl, "you may indeed be afraid of James Priminheere. Alas! that you should ever have been led away to the gaming-table."

"I have not mentioned the gaming-table, Mary," said Roger Mortimer.

"But I know that you have been there, and I am fearful that you have involved yourself," said his sister.

"Every debt is paid, poor as I am, Mary."

"Then it is not yet too late, brother; for the remnant which we have left will be sufficient."

"Byrdwood must be given up," said Mortimer, with an anxious eye.

"I am content, and I am sure that my mother will not repine; only abandon this awful practice of gambling, and all will yet be well."

Mortimer was staggered by this appeal: he had firmly resolved upon devoting himself to the dice till they should redeem his influence and his fortunes.

"A ruined man never plays with success," said Mary, laying hold on her brother's arm with energy. "Abstain, Roger, I beg of you; for the sake of all that you love, be determined, and never cast another dice."

Mortimer appeared very thoughtful, and returned no answer.

"Even if no harm should result from this warning," continued his sister, "you will promise to shun the gaming-table for the future."

"It will rescue me from trouble, and my family from poverty," said Mortimer.

"Never, never!" replied his sister, with increased

perseverance; "be content to partake of the little which Providence has yet left within our reach. Promise me that you will never more play at a game of chance."

The earnest entreaty of his sister, whom he loved with the truest affection, operated powerfully upon the mind of a youth whose disposition was by no means irredeemable; he paused, but dared not give his word. He had denied the commission of crime in the very teeth of his forgery, but he could not add a fault which the emergency of the moment did not absolutely demand. Like many gamesters, he would gladly have withdrawn himself from the tempting scene, but for the losses he had endured. Let him but retrieve these, and he would retire for ever. Whilst he was balancing these considerations, against the renewed persuasions of his wise and well-disciplined sister, a loud and unaccustomed ringing at the gate attracted the attention of both. The summons was like one of authority, and the unceasing peal seemed to command a speedy obedience. There was a suddenness in the event, which caused a dull paleness to overspread the cheek of Mortimer; and his sister, too, faithfully remembering the prophetic words of Charles Priminheere, sunk back upon a chair, and watched the coming footstep with a thrill of horror.

But before we disclose the occasion of this mysterious incident, we must go back for a few hours in order to explain the cause of Charles Priminheere's uneasiness, and of his brother's strange carriage to Mortimer. It will be recollected that the latter returned to his home discontented and even uneasy after the settlement of accounts between himself and Mortimer. The compulsion he felt in giving up the deed of assignment, the escape which his neighbour had evidently enjoyed, the acute remarks of Mr. Soland, the independent bearing of Mortimer himself, had incensed him in no moderate degree, and he might be said now to cherish grudge upon grudge against the possessor of the Byrdwood property which he coveted. His claim upon that estate had been met by a check which was duly paid, and the bundle of notes so frequently alluded to. Priminheere carried the notes to his country banking-house in a neighbouring town after the lapse of a few days, and they had been imitated with sufficient cleverness to elude the cursory observation of the clerk who received them. Thus far Morti-

mer had prospered, but an after-reckoning was at hand. The greater part of the notes were sent immediately to the Bank in London, and the well-tutored inspector of that establishment at once pronounced them to be forgeries, and, moreover, declared them to be the manufacture of a dangerous gang. The false paper was detained, accordingly, in the metropolis, and orders were given to discover some clue, without loss of time, to the perpetrator of the offence. It was, of course, soon ascertained that the notes had been paid in by James Priminheere to the house of the country-bank, and he was requested to communicate the name of the person from whom he had received them. The very mention of a forgery at first terrified the apostate Calvinist, and it was not until the particular nature of the transaction had been carefully and repeatedly explained, that he sufficiently recovered from his surprise to give an account of the transaction. By the aid, however, of the lawyers, Dell and Head, who were sent for, he not only cleared himself of any guilty participation in an affair so formidable, but even drew considerable compassion upon his own case, in consequence of the obviously severe loss to which he was subjected. His innocence appeared so plain upon this occasion, that he obtained a complete triumph, and the result was to excite his spirit, which had been agitated by the fearful name of forgery, against the ill-fated Mortimer, whose connexion with these engines of fraud could be established beyond the chance of refutation. It were well for Mortimer if he could shift upon a third party the burden which Priminheere had thus been successful enough to rid himself of, at least as far as personal danger was concerned. The latter had sufficient discernment to know that his enemy was now in his power; for even if he should be unable to bring home the crime of forgery, he was in a condition to demand five thousand pounds more for the redemption of Byrdwood. Priminheere had reason to believe that the owner of this property could not, under any circumstances, command so large a sum, and hence he counted himself once more to be secure of the advantage he had so long endeavoured to attain. It was proposed that Mortimer should be sent for, or that a person connected with the Bank should see him upon the subject, and form a judgment of his guilt or otherwise, accord-

ing to the explanation which he might be disposed to give. This was a reasonable proceeding, especially towards a landed proprietor of Mr. Mortimer's respectability and standing in the county; and, beyond doubt, had it been suggested in the first instance, Priminheere would have gladly assented. But now that he had been able to rally, and to discover his true position respecting the affair in question, he assumed a higher tone, and urged the immediate apprehension of Mortimer. He represented that the act which had taken place, was the common resource of a disappointed gamester; that if notice were given to the accused, he would probably fly, and elude the hands of justice. He said that Mortimer had borne a suspicious character for many years; that his estate had been deeply encumbered, and himself embarrassed, and that he would prosecute him in this instance upon his own responsibility. Great attention was paid to these statements, made plausibly, and with seeming impartiality; but the proposition of sending officers to Byrdwood was at first received with great surprise, and it was intimated to Priminheere, that too much caution could not be used in taking such a step. He insisted and remonstrated, and, notwithstanding the difficulties which his brother Charles from time to time interposed, he ultimately persuaded the men in authority that the arrest might not only be made with safety, but that such a course would be praiseworthy, and even indispensable. This resolution being taken, it was arranged that an officer from London should be sent for, and that the warrant should be placed in his hands, jointly with a constable of the neighbourhood. However, no sooner had Charles Priminheere learned this determination, than he hurried to Byrdwood, and urged the escape of Mortimer with the earnestness which we have described. For, to say nothing of his attachment to Mary Mortimer, he believed it impossible that her brother could be guilty of forgery, and condemned the proceeding which had been taken, as harsh and unjustifiable. When James Priminheere met Mortimer, as we have related, the officer was hourly expected; and the reader may possibly have guessed, by this time, the occasion of the loud ringing at Byrdwood gate, an event, however, which we shall ourselves explain in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

THE VILLAGE ALEHOUSE.

"Imagination fondly stoops to trace
The parlour splendours of that festive place."
GOLDSMITH.

In a nook hard by the high road which led onwards to Bedford, stood the village alehouse. One of those ancient elms which the forefathers of many generations had venerated, still spread its ample shade around the dwelling of mine host. Five massive limbs stood forth from the wide girth of the tree, whose sheltering boughs formed a canopy for the tired traveller, and a retiring place from the summer's fierceness. The leaf had now fallen, and many a fruitful branch had withered, but the giant stem towered in naked majesty, bespeaking the admiration of the passenger, and kindling the fond remembrance of village tales. The oaken seat, fretted deeply with rustic names, encircled the old idol of the place; the round-toed table had not as yet been taken in, and the mug of the way-going wagoner still foamed upon its tottering board. The Boniface of the day was a quiet disciple of the can; neither dropsically large, nor discreditably meager, nor yet was he proverbially good-humoured. A man he was who calmly passed each day without a sigh or a transport, well enough indeed respected for the silent zeal with which he dispensed his liquor, but one who would be scarcely more remembered in the grave than a stray cat, or a falling sparrow. The glories of his much-frequented public were reserved for the bulky personage whom he had for thirty years called his wife. If he were indifferently proportioned, she was immense; if his face were pale and unimportant, her's was like the full-blown peony; if his legs were unworthy of the gouty stocking and the giant slipper, her's were full, and round, and firm as her own imperial ale-barrels; if his ordinary arm and servile hand passed unnoticed, her's, whether in the field or the closet, was a mighty weapon, which even in its gentlest movements, might create alarm. So courteous sometimes, with words as nice as honey, she won every guest, and doubled all the scores; but then again, so wrathful upon occasion, she would awe her spouse into silence, heave out the obstinate drunkard, and strike

dumb with terror the careless debtor of the week. It was to this Herculean lady that Albert Moonshine owed his arm-chair and his influence.

"What and if he baan't so wise," she was wont to say, with a voice like a new mill-wheel, "is he not the gentleman, and don't he drink like other folk, ay, and much more than your—"

We cannot venture to write the remainder of her speech, which was accompanied by an upturning of the nose and eyes, significant enough to have upset at least a dozen Temperance societies. Carl Jones, the riotous blacksmith, was like an unweaned lamb when she took him to task; indeed, it was reported for some time in the village, that she had laid violent hands on him upon a certain emergency, in the same manner as St. Dunstan is supposed to have treated the devil. And such a hatred did she entertain against lawyers and excisemen, that when any such entered her abode, they were compelled to use as many spells to sooth her, as would have made them pass for magicians in any other country.

It was about the hour of Mortimer's return home, or perhaps rather earlier, when a choice group of visiters were assembled at the village alehouse. Moonshine, Jones, the man of office so often mentioned, with several more such cheery friends, were established in their accustomed seats. The evening promised to be windy, for the sky was lowering and heavy, and the gust had already whistled through the old elm pretty smartly; but the landlady was in a right hospitable humour, and when that was so, the guests cared but little for the elements without. She served them with her own peerless hands; for although the inn could well afford it, it had long been understood that no servant, young or aged, would think of adventuring within her clutches.

"Here's your health, Master Albert, and a good deliverance to your next speech," said the man of office.

"Mr.—Mr." said the landlady, "I insist on your holding your tongue, and not mentioning that thing in my house. Mr. Moonshine is a gentleman; what signifies his prating like some folks what knows every body's business except their own? humph!"

"Come, Mrs." exclaimed a stranger, "now we've got all we want, and you may brush."

"Hey is the day, and forsooth! who are you?" said

she, advancing recklessly upon the astonished countryman; "a varlet whom nobody knows, presuming to speak so to me, in my own house. Brush, indeed!—brush and bundle you: there—you may have your beer for nothing—Come."

And with that, she griped his arm with so unsparing an effort, that he was speedily removed from his snug corner to the weatherside of the inn-door, no one offering to render him the least assistance.

"Dame," said Moonshine, "don't you leave us, don't go away." And he yawned idly in his chair.

"He speaks and acts as a gentleman should," said the landlady, with a self-gratulating toss of the head. "Forsooth, and I'm not the woman to intrude myself upon any folks, out of my station. Every body knows it, as knows me." And so saying, she left the room, banging the door with such a stroke, as would have gone near to annihilate any other than the well-strung nerves of her accustomed guests.

"I say, gentlemen," said Master Albert; "I have been thinking." All eyes were turned upon the gaping squire, who, however, ceased to speak.

"A pretty fellow to deliver our address to Mortimer!" muttered Jones in a very low voice.

"Do you know," said the man of office, "that I have heard say, that Mr. Priminheere is to be the master of Byrdwood now?"

"For as how?" said Carl.

"Because the mortgage is not rightly paid off," observed the other.

"That was the very thing I wanted to speak about," said Moonshine. "Now listen."

"Listen to the squire," was the universal cry.

"I say, gentlemen," slowly proceeded Albert, "what right has this Priminheere to a mortgage? Isn't it very strange that Mr. Mortimer, the old man I mean, who was so prudent and careful, should leave such a sad piece of business as this behind him? I say, gentlemen, isn't it?"

"It is a marvellously odd thing," said the official gentleman.

"Did any body ever hear of such an event as this mortgage?" continued Albert.

"The oldest man among us never heard of any such thing," observed Jones.

"Then there's been some foul play, gentlemen, and it's likely that there will be more," said Moonshine.

"Didn't you pick up some papers once, Master Albert?" said a plain-looking country fellow.

"Ay, my good lad, I think—I think I did, many years ago."

"I recollect something about a receipt for a mortgage," said the countryman, scratching his head respectfully.

"Master Albert has got it among his papers now, I'se warrant him," said Carl Jones.

"Surely, gentlemen," said Albert, "I do remember something about Mr. Mortimer, and a mortgage, and a thousand pounds, and a payment, and picking up some papers, and thrusting them into a corner."

"Then you will be able to find them, I hope," said the man in office.

Albert answered this appeal by a yawn, which was perfectly cavernous, and was preparing to relapse into his usual apathy, when Jones pulled him by the sleeve.

"Master Albert," said the blacksmith, "this is a very mysterious thing. Couldn't you look for these here papers?"

"Impossible!" drawled out the squire.

"There is something very dark in the looks of that fearful man, Priminheere," said the official person. "I don't like to meet him."

"He's a deep one, I do doubt," cried the blacksmith.

"Hist! I thought I heard a noise outside," continued Jones.

"Some traveller passing," said mine host, who had crept in to hear the conversation.

"No, no, it wan't that; it was a much stranger noise. I think there'll be some sharp work to-night somewhere," said Carl.

The wind had now indeed risen fearfully, and its wild gusts roared around the solitary dwelling. The company gradually drew nearer to the fire.

"I always do hear these noises when some odd business is going forward. I heard 'em when my poor wife died."

Carl Jones's superstition had infected his companions, who, however, strove to ridicule his fancies.

"Carl, it was a higgler's cart," cried the landlord in an ecstasy, for he had really heard one pass rapidly at that instant. "These are your noises."

The blacksmith shook his head, and was silent.

"Now you've spoiled the mirth of the evening," said the official personage. "I am a little ticklish myself upon these subjects, and you know we have all got to go home. Landlady! landlady!" Mine hostess's jovial figure seemed to raise the courage of the affrighted corps. "Landlady! a glass of stiff brandy and water."

"Landlady! a glass of gin and bitters," said another, impatient to hear his own voice.

"Dame! some brandy and water," exclaimed Albert, whom every one had imagined to have been asleep.

A more convivial talk now ensued for some time, till at length Carl Jones started up suddenly, and declared that he heard the noise again.

"Oh! you old churl," cried the man of office; you can't enjoy your liquor for cowardice, and every body else must partake of your fears. Didn't I tell you that I was ticklish myself upon that point?"

"Oh dear!" was Carl's instinctive reply.

"It's the rheumatis," said a man who pretended to some skill in medicine amongst the villagers.

"It's a noise in the high road," said the inflexible host, who would have shown as much fright as any body, only that nature had spared him the look of a poltroon by awarding him enormously bushy black whiskers.

"It's a noise, certainly," said a carpenter, whose fears were quite competent to have magnified a mouse-jump into the footsteps of forty thieves.

"It's very mortifying," cried the man of office. "It's my infirmity to hate mystery, and ghostly deeds of all sorts; and Carl Jones has conjured up this phantom, in my opinion, to plague us all."

But scarcely had a moment elapsed after this effusion, when a vehement knocking was audible enough at the door of the house.

"Shut the gate, landlord! shut the gate!" cried Jones, who was seconded by the rest of the company; "there it is, ghostly and bodily," continued the blacksmith.

"Oh! as for that, the door has been bolted and barred, this half hour, ever since the beginning of these horrid stories," said the landlord.

"Hilloa! hilloa!" exclaimed a voice from without, the thunderings at the door being continued without intermission. "A public-house shut at this time of the evening. Shame, shame! hilloa!"

"'Tis a mortal man's voice, surely," said Carl.

"Come, landlord, open the door," said the man of office, retreating into the rear as far back as he could.

But the host fidgeted about the neighbourhood of the jugs and glasses, and seemed willing to do any act whatever, except to open the house.

"The door is giving way," said Albert, raising himself upright in his chair.

And, indeed, so it would but for mine hostess, who, hearing a clamour below, like the hammering of an anvil, mingled with confused murmurings and voices, rushed down stairs, like an impatient tigress.

"Mr. Hodgehouse," (which she pronounced Hodgeus,) said she, vociferating at her spouse; "see, if there an't the door shut, and the folks knocking. Why don't you go and open it this minute?"

"Why, dame, who knows who it may be?" said her husband, with great moderation.

"Oh, you staunch cowards!" cried the landlady, hurrying towards the entrance with a candle.

"Bolted and barred!" cried she, swinging back the fastenings, and tossing the great wooden barricade on the floor. "Gentlemen, wait a moment; what would you please to want? We have every thing in the house. What a set of cowards!"

With such hurried ejaculations, the way into the inn was laid open, and a group of half a dozen persons appeared, as impatient and angry as might have been expected.

"Oh, Christopher! is it you?" exclaimed the landlady, recognising one of Mortimer's servants.

"Yes, it is I indeed," replied the groom; "and a pretty fellow your husband is, for barring us out, now master's in danger."

"Ah, Christopher! is it you?" said Jones, advancing towards him, as bold as an untamed colt.

"Mortimer in danger!" cried Moonshine, jumping from his seat with unwonted alacrity: "How?"

"The sheriff's officers," cried the groom.

"How do you know they were sheriff's officers?"

"Because they looked like those rascals," said Christopher. "D'ye think I don't know a sheriff's officer when I see one?"

"Then it's all out now," said Carl Jones; "this is Master Priminheere's trick."

"I fancy as it is," said Christopher; "for my part, I ran off here directly, to see what could be done."

"Sheriff's officers come to carry him away from his family! Oh, dear! oh dear!" cried Albert.

"I don't think they were sheriff's officers," said another voice.

"Who are you?" said Jones. "Oh, I see—Tim Carwell. What makes you think so?"

"Why, I saw them go by the bottom of our lane, and one of 'em was quite a gentleman, and as for the other, I shouldn't be surprised to find that he's our constable."

"Nonsense, man," returned Christopher; "don't I know our constable?"

"And sheriff's officers dress wondrous like gentlemen now, too," said another of the crowd.

"Well, and while we are debating, Master will be carried to goal," said Christopher.

"But what's to be done?" demanded Carl.

"Very true," said the official: "what is to be done?—we can't help it."

"Yes, you can," screamed the landlady, who had been watching an opportunity to interfere; "if you had a drop of decent blood in your veins, you'd rescue him."

The word rescue was pronounced with such energy, as to make the very glasses chatter on the table. Horror sat on the countenance of the man of office; but the proposition seemed exactly to suit the majority.

"Bravo!" cried Carl, after pausing a minute, "who'll go to the rescue?"

"I, and I, and I," resounded throughout the room.

"One and all?" said Carl.

"One and all," was the reply.

Albert stood aghast at his own desperate resolution. The man of office took advantage of the confusion, and slunk quietly home.

"A bumper of brandy and water, landlady," cried Jones; "come, my lads, these are sheriff's officers."

"So I say," said Christopher.

"Gentlemen, a glass all round," said the landlady.

"And I'll treat the whole," said Albert.

"No, Master Albert, you sha'nt; I'll give it in so good a cause," returned Mrs. Hodgehouse.

"Three cheers and away," said Jones.

Three cheers were given, and the party issued forth under the orders of Carl, with shouts and exultations, which promised the advent of great exploits.

We left Mortimer and his sister at the instant when their conversation was interrupted by the loud ringing of the gate-bell. They were not allowed to remain long in suspense. A servant came running in haste and alarm, followed by two men dressed in drab great coats, whose appearance at once bespoke their authority and their mission.

"For God's sake, have mercy on him," cried Mary Mortimer, who swooned, and was carried out of the room.

"Let no one be uneasy," said the chief of the two men, who was a London officer, and whose companion was not the constable of the village, but an assistant from the capital.

"Mr. Mortimer," said he, producing a warrant, "you are my prisoner; but if you are innocent, you have nothing to fear; I know my duty too well to put you to any further inconvenience than is necessary. Be so good as to leave the room, Sir," added the officer, addressing the servant, who lingered. This order would not, even now, have been obeyed, but for Mortimer, who motioned with his hand that he should be left alone with the officers.

"Probably you know the nature of the charge against you Sir?" said the chief.

"I can guess it, I believe," said Mortimer.

"I am sure, I hope you will be able to clear yourself, Sir," continued the other; "but the particular offence for which you are in custody, is the passing of forged notes."

"I guessed as much, indeed," said Mortimer.

"Then you must have known that the notes were forged when you uttered them," continued the officer. "It is a very painful office for me to arrest a gentleman in his own house, and I would be willing to give any indulgence consistently with my duty, if I thought you were innocent."

Mortimer felt that he had committed himself, and remained silent.

"Nay, I would not wish to press you on the subject," said the officer, "only it does appear rather odd, that a gentleman like you should be apprehended in his own house, without some proof of his knowing of the forgery."

"They have no proof of that, have they?" said Mortimer, catching at the idea.

His agitated manner, however, did not escape the penetrating and practised eye of the constable.

"This is hardly the language of an innocent man, Sir. I am very sorry for it," observed the officer; "we wish you well through it, but it is our business to convey you to a place of security."

"Gentlemen," said Mortimer, "will you let my servants bring you some refreshment, and allow me, in the mean time, to arrange a few trifling affairs, and to take leave of my mother and sister.

"We are much obliged, Sir," said the officer: "we certainly will not refuse your kindness; but, you know, we must keep you in our sight as much as possible."

"I tell you what, Mr. Bush," said the associate, "now I have a bit of skill in physiognomy, and I recommend that we don't trust this young gentleman."

This suggestion was made in a whisper entirely private.

"He doesn't look like a runaway chap, although as to his innocence, I'm mum," was the answer of the other officer.

The provisions were now brought, and the keepers of the fatal warrant sat down confidently to enjoy the feast which had been set before them. The most choice ale was placed upon the table, by the express command of Mortimer, whose servant gave evident tokens of the feeling which he entertained towards the strangers by certain low murmurs, and grumblings, and significant leers, of which, however, no notice fortunately was taken. The servants of the law had ridden far and fast; and having been despatched instantly from Priminheere's, were faint and hungry, so that the viands quickly passed away, together with many draughts of strong beer, and, which was of more importance to Mortimer, a considerable portion of time.

"How he fidgets towards the door!" said the assistant, during the early part of the repast.

"Don't you see that he is a gentleman?" observed the other; "he is not like the rascally crew we have to deal with in London. For my part, I like to give my eyes a rest for a few hours; they are always on the stretch in town. Let him go out, if he pleases."

"Well, you know best," said the other.

And indeed the chief constable was quite in the right when he spoke, for Mortimer entertained neither the notion of resistance nor of escape when he begged for the indulgences above alluded to. Finding that no impediment was thrown in the way of his departure from the room, Mortimer hastened to take leave of his family. We will not dwell upon the affecting and heart-breaking interview which ensued; it is not given to language to describe adequately the pangs of a farewell; but such and so severe were they upon this occasion, that Mary Mortimer, overwhelmed by distress, left the room, and unconsciously wandered into that where the officers were sitting. They were reclining upon their comfortable seats as deeply wrapt in sleep as ever drunken constables were in the days of Sir John Fielding. The beer had been powerful enough, but there was, in fact, another reason for the somnolency of these unwelcome visiters—more than fifty drops of opium had been carefully dropped into the liquor by the servant who waited upon them, and who was just then treading slowly upstairs in order to satisfy himself of the success of his scheme. Mary Mortimer was not slow in perceiving the chance of escape which was thus left open, and even offered to her brother; but the execution of this enterprise was rendered extremely doubtful by reason of a most unlucky incident which occurred at the very instant when deliverance appeared certain. John had just gained the apartment, highly applauding himself for his stratagem, when Miss Mortimer hastily retreated from the sleeping gaolers for the purpose of giving her brother immediate notice of his good fortune. Each was too fully occupied to regard the other, and the mutual meeting was so sudden that the young lady could not forbear uttering a faint cry. This evil, however, might have been of no consequence, for the dangerous guests were too profoundly silent to be very easily awakened; but the servant, in his terror and anxiety to retire, threw down a heavy folding screen, which stood

alongside of the door. Great and disastrous was the fall of the huge thing at this all-important moment, for it tumbled to the ground with a clamour like that of rusty armour mentioned in ancient story, or like the genii-rousing gate of Caucasus, when it rolled savagely on its hinges to rebuke the slumbering infidel.

"Hilloa!" said the officer's helpmate, starting from his deep rest, "Mr. Bush—Mr. Bush!"

"Ay—well—what?" was the almost ventriloquous reply.

"Hui! hui! what have we been doing? Mr. Bush, Mr. Bush, I say, we're all lost," said the other, shaking his comrade with all-powerful perseverance.

"Where's the prisoner, Bond?"

"You may well say that, when you've been asleep," cried his associate.

"But why didn't you wake me?" exclaimed Bush; "you've been fast too; your eyes tell the tale. Come, we must see after our man."

And so saying the two officers hastily quitted the room to look for their charge. But in this search they could not so easily have succeeded, had it not been for the voice of Miss Mortimer, which was distinctly audible from below. Thither, therefore, the policemen instantly resorted, and, indeed, had they waited a minute longer, they had been too late.

Mary Mortimer had not lost a second in discovering her brother. He was in a parlour which overlooked the lawn, arranging some papers. The window was partially open. His sister rushed in breathless.

"Escape, my dear Roger," she exclaimed; "the officers are asleep, but the skreen has tumbled down, and they will be up directly."

"No, I can't escape," said Mortimer, "it will look like guilt." He had not admitted to his sister his knowledge of the forgery.

"My dear, you must escape," said Mary, urging her brother towards the door.

Mortimer hesitated.

"'Tis too late, they are coming, I hear them!" exclaimed his sister; "they are coming down stairs! escape by the window; now"—and she threw open the sash to the fullest—"now, for God's sake, Roger, go!"

But the maiden's voice had betrayed her; for at the

instant when Mortimer was stepping out of the window, the men pressed forward into the room, and seized his arm.

"Just in time—" cried Bond, "I won't swear before the lady."

Bush lifted up his eyes to heaven in token of his feelings.

"A narrow chance indeed," said he. "Now we a'an't bound to any further terms with him," said Bond.

"No!" replied the chief; "he must come along with us now."

The dejected and self-convicted Mortimer prepared to follow his conductors.

"We'll handcuff him, now," said Bond; "the gentleman can't be very innocent, or he wouldn't have made us drunk, and then have offered to run away."

"Oh mercy, gentlemen!" exclaimed Mary.

But the principal constable felt the force of the suggestion, and was about to inflict this fresh mortification upon Mortimer, when a tremendous cheer was heard, so close that it seemed almost at the door.

"What's that?" cried Bush, looking round with a suspicious air.

"Come along, my lads, hurrah!" answered a loud voice from without.

Carl Jones was at hand with his determined troop, and having gained intelligence of the events which were passing, he advanced boldly into the house. Mary Mortimer had heard the cheer, and feeling her brother's perilous condition, she hastened forth in hopes of gaining aid. The triumphant shout was a prophecy of assistance to her.

"This way, gentlemen!" she exclaimed, as the rescuers touched their hats to her in the hall. "This way, if you are willing to save my brother."

The band of villagers quickly made their way into the room where the astonished officers were standing, each firmly grasping their prisoner.

"Let the squire go," cried Jones, brandishing a vast club at the head of his party.

"He's a prisoner on a charge of forgery," said the chief officer with much calmness; "in the King's name I charge you desist."

Carl was chap-fallen at the mention of forgery and the King's name.

"He is charged with uttering forged notes," said Bond, "and it isn't much like an innocent man to try to escape."

"Hush, man," cried Bush, alarmed for the indiscretion of his follower.

"It's a lie!" exclaimed Christopher the groom; "these fellows are sheriff's officers."

"No!" said Bush, "my name is Timothy Bush, and I think every body knows me well enough."

"You're no more Timothy Bush than I am," said the groom; "'tis all a come-off to escape being tossed in a blanket."

"But what says the squire himself?" said a countryman.

Mortimer, however, remained inflexibly silent.

"If you was really London men come down on so serious a business," said Carl, "why it would be all the odds; but in my mind you're sheriff's officers—and if so, why, we don't allow 'em in our village, that's all."

"Come, you'd better bundle, gentlemen," said a raw-boned youth, with a flourish of his stick.

"They've been getting drunk upon Master's best ale," said the servant.

"Then they must be sheriff's officers," cried Carl.

"Timothy Bush wouldn't do that, I knows," said a gardener in the company. "I knows Timothy Bush very well,—the noted runner you know," added he, turning to his neighbour.

"And they've been asleep in the parlour all this time," continued the servant.

"Timothy Bush is too sharp a hand for that," said the gardener exultingly.

"Come, you must let the squire go, gentlemen bumbailies," said Jones, "otherwise, down with 'em, my lads."

"Take notice of the force, Bond," said the officer; "let them come on at their peril."

"Down with them," was the general cry; "down with the sheriff's followers!"

"I think it's the sheriff himself, to judge by his dress," said one of the party.

"No, no, man," replied he to whom this was addressed; "d'ye you think the sheriff would have any thing to do with such a business as this?"

"I don't know," said the other; "there's no telling what the great folks will do now-a-days."

The cries against the constables now increased, and Carl was advancing towards them with the foremost of the mob, when the former drew their cutlasses.

For this menace, Carl and his friends were wholly unprepared; like yelping curs, they gave back upon the show of resistance, and but for Mortimer's presence of mind, it is highly probable that the lads of the village alehouse would have been discomfited, and that two would have been a match for twenty. Mortimer, however, profited by the first assault of the crowd, and when the officers drew their weapons, he rapidly disengaged himself from their hold, bounded through the low window, and darted across the lawn like a man in a situation of extreme peril. Pursuit was vain, for independently of the inebriated condition of the gaolers, several of the crowd closed round the window, and though unwilling to make an attack, they presented, with outstretched cudgels, a line of defence by no means inconsiderable.

"It's a rescue all the same," cried Bush; "mark, a rescue."

But the villagers paid very small heed to the reproaches of the officers, for the business of the day had been accomplished; and in a short time, both the rescuers and the constables had left Byrdwood in the peaceful occupation of Miss Mortimer and her mother.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DESERTED COTTAGE.

"Where once the hawthorn grew,
Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain."

GOLDSMITH.

MORTIMER fled a-foot from his home, scarcely able to credit the certainty of his escape. So sudden was his departure, that his purse was worth little more than a few shillings, and such his condition, that each face he met raised new terrors in his harassed mind. He had passed far beyond the limits of Byrdwood before he slackened his hurried pace; had crossed and re-crossed his favourite stream, the Ouse, and was now approaching

those celebrated hills, the Chilterns, whose hundreds bestow so many unsought stewardships. Here was the noble domain of Ashridge, with its mazy groves and stately clumps of beech; and there was the old roof of Latimers, once the resting-place of royalty, with its unaspiring village, and humble church. And there again might be seen Chenies, the burial-place of the sons of Russell, where the pageantry of the lofty dead speaks, like the simple tombstone, a sober lesson to the living. This was that Russell, the ancestor of the Bedfords, the friend of Sydney, who shook the throne of the Stuarts, and perished by the mandate of his inexorable sovereign. And then again might be seen the well-watered valley of Flaunden, with its silent spire, standing alone amidst the streams, the chapel of the solitary waste.

Through these romantic spots Mortimer, the wretched and forlorn fugitive, hastened, as though the avenger of blood were behind him. He was at length benighted amidst the lanes and commons of the wild district, and found that he had exchanged one peril only to be menaced by others. The intricate and endless windings were often perplexing to the dwellers in the neighbourhood, but the ignorant wayfarer might toil for many miles without gaining a village, or finding an outlet. After a weary travel over moor and marsh, desert paths, and widely-branching ways, the wanderer at length beheld a hut in a deep dark lane, whose waving sign seemed to promise refreshment and shelter. But far different was the landlady of this solitary public from her of the village which he had left, and the host also was quite another sort of a man. Not but that Mrs. Hodgehouse would now and then mark by her behaviour to the stranger that she cared not how soon he sped him on his way, but she was not the woman to have refused a crust of bread and a glass of beer to the meanest traveller. Mortimer made several efforts to open the gate of this unassuming hovel, and at length succeeded in pushing back the bolt, amidst the incessant yelpings of a yard cur, and the unwelcome vociferation of—"What do you waant?" from within.

"A tired and hungry traveller, good Christians," said Mortimer, thoroughly humbled by fright, fatigue, and want.

Out of a low window, a long, pale visage was peep-

ing, which the gleam of a candle made still more hideous. Such a figure might still be deemed a witch in some parts of our empire.

"We ha' shut up for the night," said the woman of the house, for such was the inhospitable personage whom Mortimer beheld.

"Where is your husband?" cried Mortimer in despair, observing that she was about to close the window.

"Oh! he's here," said she. "Ben, ye're wanted."

"Well," said the roughest voice in the whole parish, "who's this at such a time o' night?"

The woman withdrew her withered form, and a hard-featured, brawny peasant, with a red nightcap on his head, looked out in her place.

"You keep an inn here," said Mortimer, "and I insist upon being admitted."

"We don't open our doors at this time o' night. You can't be after any good, I'm sure."

"My friend," said Mortimer, "I am starving and dying with fatigue, and I can pay you for your accommodation."

"He says he can pay; shall we let him in?" said the man to his listening partner.

"Let him in? no! shut the window, Ben; may be, he's one of the incendiaries."

The bare mention of such a person affrighted the landlord sorely, and scared away the pity which was rising, and he swore with a furious oath, that he would not open at such a time,—"no, not for nobody," said Ben, shutting to the window, with a decision which forbade all further hopes.

"I insist on coming in," said Mortimer, advancing to the door and knocking loudly, in spite of the cur which was barking at him from behind.

"It's very lucky you didn't let that fellow in," said the woman to her husband. "I hope he won't beat the door down. Set Yap at him."

The fugitive, however, finding that further application was useless, and that the deceitful cabin was again dark and silent, withdrew from its inhospitable gate. He was again committed to solitary wretchedness, to a night-travel over an unknown tract, where there was neither a refuge for the houseless, nor a guide to help the erring stranger. At length, seeing the door of a

cottage in a narrow lane half open, Mortimer ventured in, and instantly fell fast asleep upon the tiled pavement, nor did he wake until the sun had for some hours restored light and cheerfulness to the world.

The dwelling upon whose cold entrance he had reposed during the night, was situated in the midst of a long and dreary by-way. It was in a low valley, grass-grown, and deeply furrowed with ruts. Above were clusters of oaks and beech, which crowned the summits of either hill, and beneath were tall nut-stems, whose lofty hedges, wild and untrimmed, withstood the light of day, and wrapped the vale in shadow.

Mortimer arose amazed and alarmed; but his fears were groundless, for there was none to disturb him. He cautiously passed over the lowly tenement, but not a being appeared to question or arrest his footsteps. The rooms were desolate and void, damp hung heavily upon the already mouldering walls, and the big drops pattered mournfully upon the floor beneath. Mortimer completed his survey, but not a voice was heard; a dull distressing silence admonished him that neither friend nor foe was at hand. He was weak and in want of food; but such were his apprehensions, that he scarcely dared to venture beyond the gate of his retreat, for it was now day, and he was a stranger and a fugitive.

The sequestered cot which had afforded him this nightly shelter, was one of those dwellings from whence a family with seven children had been a few months since expelled. It was a place whose wild and comfortless situation could not protect it from the rapacity of avarice. A landlord, who had been raised from the lowest ranks to affluence by a freak of fortune, was the owner, but when his prosperity came upon him, he forgot the poor in his high bearing, and abjured the race from whence he had sprung. Unmelted by the tears and prayers of those who could not pay his exorbitant demand, and indifferent to all consequences, he drove his tenants from their home, and sent them to burthen the community to which he himself was an unwilling contributor. But there was a day of justice for this man. A sense of his oppressions kindled the resentment and indignation of the neighbourhood, and this, as well as others of his cottages, were deserted by their inmates. Time and neglect had already impaired the labours of

honest industry. The slender garden was choked with weeds; the unwholesome hemlock, the barren oat, the noxious nightshade, the spreading dandelion, were ravaging the once profitable potato-beds. The newly-fruited espalier, whose boughs but a year since had been laden with gladdening produce, now drooped with unpruned and shattered shoots, a barren shadow of the past. The pales, which still bore marks of the care and neatness of the inhabitants, were broken and untidy, sometimes torn by the thriftless urchins of the village, sometimes falling to decay with no frugal hand to repair them. Here, as if in mockery of the sad scene, was the evening primrose, displayed in original beauty, as when the humble labourer was wont to return from his day's toil, and gaze upon the flowers which he had reared; and there might be seen the last remnant of the latest rose, one other ornament of the cheerless solitude.

It was an aching sight for Mortimer. He looked around, and while he beheld the wreck of better things, he could not but contrast it with the moral change which himself had suffered. How few months had gone by since wealth, and pleasure, and advancement, were at his command! In all the sadness of his desolation Mortimer thought of the days of the past, when hope had met with no curb, and memory felt not the sting of care. Each step of the calamity which had destroyed him, vexed and distracted his mind in turn; the sudden intelligence of the mortgage, the rapid journey to a foreign country, the brilliant gains at the rouge et noir table, the reverse of greedy fortune at Newmarket, the ruinous toils of the election—all these confounded his torn spirit, as their recollections rose before it! But the deed he had committed now seemed like an untimely dream. It was impossible to retrieve it! Mortimer felt that he would have given all he possessed to have been able to recall the day when he passed the notes to Priminheere. Poverty, in all her ugliest forms (and they are indeed revolting), would have been a boon. Alas! as matters stood at present, the sufferer knew that he had paid away his last hundred! He was indigent, disgraced, and a fugitive! Suicide, the last grand agent of the arch tempter—the supposed refuge of the desperate and the hopeless—suicide still remained, if the victim had a hand and a heart to dare its random pro-

mises. Nor was the fiend wanting in his effort. The triumph of emancipation, full and free, was presented to the mind of Mortimer with the brightest prospects and the most joyous consequences. A leap beyond the grave, the work of a moment, would save him from ignominy, from suffering, and from sorrow!—but Nature forbade the effort. Mortimer caught greedily at the proffered charm, but it perished in the hope. He could not compound with Death. There was not even a struggle, for his heart died within him when he contemplated the deed of self-destruction.

Thus harassed, and no longer able to cope with the increasing sorrows whose tide had set in against him, he hastened from the spot of desolation, and sought for some inhabited dwelling where he might be able to relieve the hunger which now began to assault him.

We will leave Mortimer in this uncertain state for a few moments, while we relate the consequences of his escape from Byrdwood. The constables, finding that their charge had contrived to accomplish a complete emancipation, and that any attempt at pursuit would be in vain, were content to abandon a place where ridicule was the least formidable weapon which could assail them. Jokes, however, were freely vented at their expense, and Mr. Timothy Bush, the famous thief-taker, never had more occasion to command his temper and restrain his resentment, than at this instant. His parting words, notwithstanding, were hostile in a high degree; they savoured strongly of the insult which he had sustained, and of the punishment which the law accorded against rescuers. Yet, far from irritating the assembly, increased laughter was the only result of these menaces from the chief policeman. The mob were too conscious of their numbers, and too well satisfied with their success, to injure the extremely small minority with whom they had to deal; so that both parties separated without a struggle, to the great satisfaction of Mrs. Mortimer and her daughter, who had long since been a prey to the worst apprehensions.

But Mr. Bush had no sooner achieved a final escape from the thraldom of the rescuers, than a sense of his own condition and of the negligence of which he had been guilty, immediately recurred to his mind. He held

an instantaneous and a very serious consultation with his partner, in the sequel of which it was determined, that whatever colour they might think fit to give to the proceedings of the multitude, no mention should be made of the refreshment with which they had been treated, or of the sleep which had so fatally attended their repast. And, indeed, they had formed a right judgment in adopting this resolution, for the anger of Priminheere, when he was informed of the accident, knew no bounds. He raved like a tiger, whose prey had eluded the spring of its invader, and it required the most subtle address and conciliating humility on the part of Mr. Bush, to pacify the angry magistrate. At length, however, the plausible representations of the infuriated state of a drunken mob, of the extreme peril which two opposed to numbers must necessarily have incurred, and of the manful resistance which had actually been made, in some measure appeased the man who united upon this occasion the discordant conditions of justice and prosecutor. But Priminheere deemed pursuit to be absolutely essential, and he insisted that the officers should set forth without loss of time in search of the criminal. It would, however, have been much more easy for him to have commanded this rapid proceeding, than to have enforced it, had it not happened that the policemen were overawed by the remembrances of their want of vigilance, and full of apprehensions lest Priminheere (than whom no man was more inquisitive) should discover the real history of Mortimer's most unwelcome departure. They, accordingly, raised no objection to the peremptory mandate which was delivered, and set forth in quest of the offender, quite as well pleased to be rid of the enraged prosecutor as of the crowd at Byrdwood.

Mortimer at length reached a cabin where the commonest food was dispensed to the needy, at the rate most usual in country places; that is to say, at nearly one hundred per cent. upon the greatest portion of the necessaries, and two hundred on many others. It was impolitic, and, indeed, highly hazardous on his part to appear thus publicly, for his wasted figure and anxious look betokened him neither a civil welcome, nor, in the very unsettled state of the country, an undisturbed stay. He had also been unfortunate enough to stray into one of those universal places which are known by the name of

chandlers' shops. It was no other than one of the most characteristic of these monopolising, chaffering, talk-loving, mischief-making, all-dealing houses which received the hungry wanderer. If bread were wanted, and it was that which Mortimer stood in need of at present, here were plenty of loaves of varying weights piled on the counter to the great annoyance of the neighbouring baker.

Butter, cheese, oils of every kind, bacon, the best and the worst, met the eye on all sides. Above hung myriads of candles, dangling with the most inviting profusion; and nearly akin to them were brushes in abundance, great and small, tall and short, and fit for every class of labourers, from the supercilious major-domo, to the all-performing scullion. Into such a place, fraught with domestic merchandise to overflowing, did the heir of Byrdwood come, and behind the counter was a bustling inquisitive woman, whose daily work was as diversified as the goods were, over which she might be said to preside. And cool indeed was the look she cast upon Mortimer, as he entered the home-stall of village gossip. He was a stranger, and not a prepossessing guest by any means, but he was a customer, and could not be refused. So that his wants were speedily, though ungraciously supplied, and he again wandered forth in quest of some spot, where he might enjoy his scanty meal in silence.

Mankind are deceived, if they imagine that the delights of tattle are confined to the softer sex. It is even a hard reproach, to which these idols of our pleasures have been subjected, that they are the sole devotees of talk and ennui. There is not a chandler's shop in the meanest village which will not give a practical contradiction to this slander.

At the very time when Mortimer left the house of which we have been speaking, two men hastened into it almost at the same moment. These were the barber and the beadle, who, although by no means unemployed, were wont to exercise their respective callings with an enviable independence and leisure. Some news had just transpired in the neighbourhood with which we are unable to acquaint the reader, and it was the fortune of these parish worthies to learn it almost at the same instant. It was something quite recent, something of incredible import, a matter worth hearing, and infinitely

more worth the imparting, so that the question was, both on the side of barber and beadle, which should give publicity the soonest.

Whether this intelligence concerned the rich or the other classes, whether it were the foundering of some reputation hitherto maintained in matchless purity, or the extinction of some ancient house whose ancestors held from the Conquest, or the last plunge of a desperate bankrupt now launched with a fresh freight upon the astonished world; or whether, to descend into mere common-place, it were the tale of a marriage, a wooing, a death, a funeral, a pageant, a ball, a meeting,—all matters of sovereign importance at the great house of call,—we cannot pretend to say. Most likely the proposed news were respecting the fires then so common in the country, and the intended history another feat of the arch incendiary; for whilst the barber and his neighbour were speaking (both kept pace together with each other), the woman, impatient of the gossip perhaps, caught the beadle by the arm.

"There's been a very suspicious character here this very moment," cried she, with an eye which told wonders.

"Where—which way—where did he go?" exclaimed the patriotic beadle.

"He can't be far off," returned the woman.

Hastily and eagerly the two villagers sallied out, which gives a colour to our idea of their story, whilst the owner of the shop forthwith stepped out to indulge a near acquaintance with an embellished edition of the event she had partly heard.

"That's the man," cried the barber, observing a person coming from one of the new beer shops which had lately been set up. "He looks like a gentleman," observed the barber again, for Mortimer's dress betrayed his rank.

"We have orders to apprehend all gentlemanly-looking persons in these parts," said the beadle, with a swaggering and fierce air.

"Is that so?" asked the barber, both pressing forward upon Mortimer, for he it was.

"During the troubles," replied the beadle, increasing in importance, and looking down upon his confederate, "the magistrates have had information, which it would

be improper for me as an officer to disclose; but, in fact, a person dressed like a gentleman is the author of all these wicked doings; and, therefore, we are to take up all gentlemen."

"All people who look like gentlemen, I suppose," said the barber.

"Vastly well," said the beadle; "you are right, Mr. Scrape; but he looks very fierce, don't he?"

The beadle was one of that portly tribe whose tawdry trappings and gold lace have struck awe into village nestlings, from time whereof man knoweth not to the contrary, but he had rarely been called upon to meddle with beings of stature equal to his own.

Mortimer was walking leisurely forward, and his pursuers had now overtaken him, but neither seemed disposed to interfere. The children skulked instinctively into their corners, with here and there a cry of "the beetle—the beetle's a coming," and the great man as naturally shook his wand, but he looked wistfully upon the barber as they approached the stranger.

"It's five hundred, a'ant it?" said the beadle.

"Five hundred—and we shall share it if we mind," said the barber, calling to mind the immense reward which had lately been offered for the apprehension of some rick-burners.

"I'll tell you what," said the beadle, "I'd give you twenty out of my share, if you'll collar him at once."

"I collar him!—I like that," said the barber; "what is to recompense me for broken bones?"

"I don't know—a-hem," said the beadle, observing that Mortimer was going on rather faster. The latter turned round, and beheld the officer of the parish arrayed in his robe of office, but vouchsafed him no further notice.

"That's the man, depend on it," cried the barber. "How wild he looks! he hasn't been shaved these six months."

"A-hem! Mr.—" said the beadle, raising his voice as high as his fears would permit, and his person to the utmost pitch of importance.

"He don't take any notice of us," exclaimed the barber.

"Don't he? I shall see though," said the beadle; "it's my opinion he's afraid."

"Mr.——" Mortimer felt a slight tug at the sleeve

of his coat; it was the shrinking hand of the parochial dignitary. The former was at that instant overwhelmed by the most mortifying and mournful considerations, and he shook off the intruder with the slightest effort.

"Oh! indeed! is it so?" cried the beadle, retreating however behind the barber, who in his turn gave back. "That's a dangerous character," continued the beadle, pointing to Mortimer, who was now in the midst of the village. "An incendiary—a rick-burner—seize him."

The women peeped hastily forth from their hovels upon hearing the name of rick-burner, and the children ran out to get a sight of a follower of Swing. Mortimer, by no means at ease, and yet not daunted by the abrupt salute, stood still, and gazed upon the officious beadle with contempt.

"That's the man as set the rick a-fire last night?—Look at him!" said the beadle, raising the hue and cry with all his might.

Mortimer might have retreated, but he could not forbear under this new accusation.

"Do you charge me with having set a rick on fire? What are you thinking of?" said he to the beadle.

But the clamour was now fully raised, and the officer advanced boldly forward with a posse sufficient to have secured a whole gang.

"Gentlemen," said Mortimer, "it is a strange and a vexatious thing, that a stranger cannot pass through your village without the insult of being called a rick-burner; but I am not going to run away, and you, Sir," addressing himself to the beadle, "must prove your words."

This appeal had like to have staggered the officer, and enabled the accused to effect his escape, but there happened to be one or two young farmers amongst the group, who had been great sufferers from the unlawful acts alluded to, and whose anger had, consequently, been kindled in no small degree. They speedily insisted upon detaining the unfortunate Mortimer, and threatened the valiant beadle that to allow the culprit to escape would, they promised him, cost no less than the loss of his place. It was, therefore, arranged that he should not have his liberty on any other terms than the due course of law; and as it was then the fittest time to carry him before a magistrate, he was required to surren-

der himself,—a demand which he complied with without further remonstrance. The party soon arrived at the office of the justice, the beadle vociferating as they passed on, that he was entitled to a full share of the reward, and the barber, on the other hand, earnestly asserting his claim to at least one half of the price of blood.

The magistrate before whom the prisoner appeared, was one of those who had sustained great damage from incendiaries, and he, accordingly regarded Mortimer with a feeling very far removed from that impartiality with which he had sworn to administer justice. But whatever might be the effect of a haggard appearance and care-worn cheek, the demeanor of the captive was not now such as when he was called on to answer the charge of forgery. Whatever fears he might labour under, he was not an incendiary; of the charge which had been brought against him, he was at least innocent. It, therefore, became very shortly apparent, that notwithstanding the suspicious circumstances of his journey, there was no evidence to warrant the detention of an unoffending stranger. The justice, reluctant as he might be, felt this in its fullest extent, and the beadle stripped of his golden hopes looked quite chap-fallen. Mortimer, in fact, was about to be liberated, when one of those fatal reverses of fortune, which afflict alike the righteous and the sinner, fell to his lot at the critical instant when he could best have dispensed with such a visitation.

We have acquainted the reader that the disappointed constables, from whose hands Mortimer had escaped, were again abroad, and it is not too much to add, that they used the most intense exertions to gain some knowledge of the fugitive. Had Mortimer, however, continued in his solitary hut, and only ventured by stealth to the neighbouring villages, he might possibly have remained secure from interruption till the heat of the pursuit had passed away. But, unluckily for him, instead of maintaining himself in seclusion, he had ventured within the walls of the most populous gossip-house in the village, and to this very spot the officers of justice, after losing their trace of him for some time, accidentally repaired. No time was lost in acquainting them of the rick-burner, as Mortimer was supposed to be,

of his uncouth and doubtful appearance, and of the energy which had been displayed in securing him. The description of his person, combined with other circumstances, convinced the acute London officer that it was his duty to repair without loss of time to the house of the magistrate, and he arrived there with his companion, at the instant when the order for the prisoner's discharge was given. It is sufficient to say, that Mortimer was immediately rendered up to his original custody, and that the overjoyed constables were well-bred enough to forego any signs of indecent triumph at his re-capture. He was conveyed back to the scene of his offence, and after a fair and careful examination, was fully committed to abide his trial before a jury at the assizes.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BANK PARLOUR.

"We have strict statutes, and most biting laws."
Measure for Measure.

THE offence of forgery has not been regarded of late years with the same indignation as formerly, possibly because the crime is deemed undeserving of death. So that it has been customary for some time to pause before a prosecution, attended with such fatal consequences, is set on foot against the criminal. This caution has been the more remarkable in proceedings against the fabricators and utterers of Bank Notes. The numbers of these offenders increased at one period so considerably, that the pity of the public was raised to a very high degree, and notwithstanding an apprehension that the commercial interests of the country would be endangered, the general compassion suspended in a great measure the severity of executions. And like most other systems of interference which have humanity for their basis, it was soon found, that in proportion to the acts of mercy which were exercised, the crime did not advance. Justice was satisfied, and iniquity did not prosper. This feeling of reform was in unison with those frequent and painful consultations which were wont to precede Bank prosecutions.

Mortimer was now the subject of these conferences. It had been usual if the deed done were not of a very black dye, to permit the prisoner at the trial to plead guilty to the offence of having notes in his possession knowing them to be forgeries. This milder course enabled the judge to sentence him to transportation for fourteen years instead of awarding the penalty of death. If the offender were a misguided youth, a distressed and ruined man, an early depredator, he was commonly allowed to avail himself of the proffered mercy. But the old agent of fraud, the wholesale dealer in bad paper, the man of abandoned character—such were selected as proper victims for justice; and were adjudged to abide the consequences of the severest indictment.

Almost every circumstance was in favour of Mortimer, unless, indeed, the large amount of the fictitious notes thus put into circulation should be alleged against him. He was not a practised utterer, he had done no previous act for which he had either endured punishment or obtained mercy, and his habits of life were those of an honourable member of society. These mitigating considerations, however, were of course unknown to his distracted family, whose condition was one which admitted of no hope, nor alleviation. Whilst the accused lay in prison awaiting the issue of his trial, a result which he himself deemed quite hopeless, his case came under discussion in the metropolis, from whence the mandates of life or death issue upon these occasions.

In a warm and well-furnished apartment the arbiters of his fate, actuated by the most discriminating humanity, were assembled. His was not the only case which required their deliberations and decision. An unusual number of sham notes had been lately, as it were, let loose upon the public, and it was resolved that some of the agents of this traffic should be made the subject of condign punishment. Several notorious dealers had been apprehended, and these as they came in their turn before the consideration of the assembly, were marked out for the more severe course of proceeding. Many unhappy dupes were reserved for the lenient penalty of transportation on condition of their submission; and two or three who appeared to have been mere tools, were set apart from the rest, as objects of unqualified mercy.

Mortimer's case at length came under the judgment

of the board. He had delivered over notes which were unquestionably false in payment of a mortgage. The witnesses against him were Priminheere, Mr. Soland, and the lawyers whom we have mentioned in a prior chapter. The facts were not to be disputed, and the question was, whether he had disposed of the documents in question with a guilty knowledge. Mortimer would no doubt insist at the trial that he had taken them from persons with whom he had no connexion nor acquaintance; at least, the Bank Solicitor judged that such would be his line of defence, and in his own mind he considered that a complete answer to the proposed prosecution. Too discreet to allow his private opinion to transpire, he could not help wondering at the temerity of Priminheere in causing the apprehension of so respectable a man upon such slender suspicion. He made light of the expressions which had changed the mind of the chief policeman, attributing them to the anxiety rather than the guilt of the accused. And he felt assured that as the matter then stood, the prisoner would scarcely be called upon by the presiding judge to make a defence, so palpable were the grounds for an acquittal. But the manifest necessity which existed for the putting down of an offence like the present, as well as the numerous instances of similar accusations, induced the lawyer to hesitate before he delivered any positive opinion upon the case submitted to the meeting.

At length after a deep pause, a member of the assembly declared, that considering the rank of the accused, the magnitude of the fraud which had been committed, the dexterity which distinguished the imitations of the real Bank Note, and the danger which might ensue from treating an affair of such a nature too lightly, he was of opinion that the business should be made the subject of a capital prosecution. Another interval of silence succeeded to the proposition. It proceeded from one of the most influential of those present, a man of known integrity and benevolence, and his announcement, which was of sufficient weight to seal the destiny of Mortimer, created an expression of general sorrow. Each one present commiserated him because he held, as they did, a high station in society, and all felt that in pronouncing judgment against him, they were inflicting the terrors of the law against a member of their own

class in life. The mournful thought came home to every breast, and many had hoped that mercy could have been interposed with consistency. The observation, however, of the party above alluded to, quickly banished all hopes, and Mortimer was on the point of being consigned to the almost certain consequences of a capital indictment, when the Bank Solicitor interfered. He had been debating within himself whether it were better, on the one hand, to continue the show of severity in this instance, as in others, with great firmness, and run the risk of gaining stronger evidence at the trial, or, on the other, whether a failure at the last might not greatly impeach the usual accuracy of the Bank, and be thus injurious to the public interest. He was halting between these opinions, when the general sympathy which was evident in every countenance, and the deep tone of feeling which burst forth, determined him to abandon the proceeding. "For how," said he, "could they expect to obtain a verdict of guilty against a person hitherto of irreproachable character, who might have been, as he probably was, the dupe of others. Mortimer had made no secret of the manner by which he acquired the notes, and it was far more likely that he should have been imposed upon by a nefarious gang, than have been the willing agent of the wrong which had been imputed to him." The Bank Solicitor could not help wishing that he had in his power the choice assemblage from whom Mortimer had won these fatal instruments. As an expounder of the law, as well as a correct adviser, the former gentleman possessed the greatest influence, so that the doubts which he intimated promised a speedy alteration in the prisoner's fate, while they gave unfeigned pleasure to all around.

But the unhappy Mortimer was not destined to escape under such favourable circumstances. The resolution of the solicitor, so pleasing and so all-sufficient, had hardly been entertained, when he was called away for an instant. He returned with a packet of papers relating to the circumstance then under discussion, and it was clear from his serious and altered aspect, that their contents were of the most painful importance.

Priminheere, in fact, had not been idle; from the instant when he signed the warrant for apprehending his intended victim, he never ceased the most diligent in-

quiries to gain proof in support of the accusation. He soon became fully aware of the flimsy grounds on which his charge rested; and conscious of his own bitter feeling towards Mortimer, he trembled lest the tide should be changed, and that his enemy should return triumphant to Byrdwood.

Hurried on, at first, to a step which his passion dictated, but his shrewder judgment eschewed, Priminheere felt that he had caused his neighbour to be dragged from his home upon the slightest pretence which could have been imagined. His own lawyers gave him timely warning of the error into which be had suffered himself to fall, and he knew that the people at large cursed him for his conduct. Thus menaced, he decided at once that he would institute the most active inquiries as to Mortimer's behaviour at Newmarket, and failing of success there, that he would negotiate with the prisoner himself for the surrender of Byrdwood, on condition of his foregoing the prosecution. But the circumstance of a tender of a loss in forged notes was not likely to be forgotten on the turf, so that when the careful investigation commanded by Priminheere was set on foot, the offer which Mortimer made, when on the field, came quickly to light. We may remember that he proposed to cover some bets, in which he had been unfortunate, by paying the self-same notes, for the uttering of which he was now in custody, and that he extricated himself, upon that occasion, with great difficulty. This event no sooner became known to Priminheere, than he fully perceived its value, and immediately securing the testimony of those who were witnesses to the transaction, despatched a messenger to the Bank Solicitor, in London, with the information which he had thus newly acquired.

This fresh intelligence was of so decisive a nature, as to cause an entire change in the sentiments of those who had met to deal with the case of Mortimer. There was no longer any room for the compassion which had nearly occasioned the discharge of the prisoner, and there was, moreover, a proof of a kind so condemning, as to leave but small doubts with regard to the issue of the trial. As far, therefore, as his offence was concerned, the assembly came immediately to an unanimous opinion, and the usual directions were given, without

delay, to proceed upon the more solemn charge. Those who are acquainted with the routine of a Bank prosecution, know well, that the persons who are selected for capital trial, rarely escape the hands of justice. And, indeed, their foresight is not confined to such as attend the courts, for the public generally participate, to a great extent, in the terror which it produces. It was little less, therefore, than a sentence of death upon Mortimer. The regrets of his afflicted neighbours, of strangers who were universally interested in his behalf; the common and unqualified detestation towards Priminheere the known agent of his ruin, and the deep distress of his family, were announcements sadly prophetic of the peril to which he was exposed. And these apprehensions were not without reason. The dread arrangements of a Bank prosecution are familiar to many. The formidable array of counsel, the silence of the court, the sober resignation of the prisoner usually arrayed in mourning, the extreme caution of the judge, the anxious watchings of the jury, give ample testimony of a most thrilling inquiry. A more solemn seriousness seldom prevails upon a trial for murder itself. Should the prisoner's counsel produce even a plausible objection, a lively sensation is felt by all around, the judge lends a willing ear, and even the advocates for the prosecution are constrained to allow that they would indeed be happy to yield, if their duty did not oblige them to support the charge. Most frequently the objection is but illusory, the spell is broken by the slow and steady determination of the judge, and the case proceeds amidst the alternate hopes and fears of the spectators. At length the hardly-wrung verdict of "guilty" is heard. A sense of horror runs feelingly through the crowd. It is the knell of death. The prisoner retires from the bar struck with the hopelessness of his condition, and scarcely hears the humane recommendation to mercy which the jury pronounce with earnestness. The judge, unable to promise a remission of the sentence, declares that he cannot receive the petition for mercy, and thus the sad scene is closed.

No sooner had the resolution of the Bank been communicated to Mortimer, than he rallied his spirits, and decided on preparing for his defence. Whilst he was deliberating upon the choice of a friend to whom he

should intrust his case, Mr. Soland was announced to him in the prison. The payment of an electioneering bill, by no means slender, had given the agent a high opinion of Mortimer's integrity, so that when he heard of the great event which had happened at Byrdwood, he conceived instantly the project of supporting the prisoner through the dangerous difficulty which menaced him. Mr. Soland believed Mortimer to be entirely innocent, he considered the prosecution which had been set on foot as the result of some gross mistake, or mysterious conspiracy, and was impatient until he should hear a history of the transaction from the sufferer himself. He accordingly hastened to the Bedfordshire gaol, where he speedily gained an introduction to the prisoner. Mortimer was engaged in forming plans for the subversion, or, at least, the explanation of that important piece of evidence which had decided his fate, for the consequences of his conduct at Newmarket had been fully explained to him.

He was both surprised and gratified at seeing his old friend and adviser, whose counsel now became doubly valuable in the hour of distress, when former associates are apt to forsake the cause of an unfortunate acquaintance. But Mortimer, although he disclosed at length the circumstances of his case, entirely suppressed the condemning fact which he so much dreaded; for he at once imagined that by revealing the disastrous affair upon the turf which had occasioned his perilous condition, he should forfeit the esteem of his companion. His account, therefore, of the transaction ratified the idea which Mr. Soland had ascertained, so that the lawyer held out unhesitatingly the most cheering hopes of an acquittal. It was, however, deemed prudent that they should have the advice and assistance of a learned sergeant, whose knowledge of the criminal law was at once acute and extensive, and Mr. Soland had no doubt but that he could prevail upon the great man to pay Mortimer a visit in the prison. He accordingly repaired to London, and not only induced the sergeant to accept a special retainer, but secured his promise that he would come down on the next day to consult upon the course which would most effectually cause the acquittal of his client.

We must still follow the fortunes of Mortimer. The

sergeant kept his word, and was seen journeying towards Bedford in his carriage at an early hour. On the following morning he hastened to the prison in order to fulfil his appointment. The great lawyer was on the verge of fifty, well-conditioned, and of a benign aspect. His brow, upon which thought had made deep inroads, was elevated, his look full but vigilant, and there lurked an arch subtlety in his eye which seemed to temper and control its fire. A more discreet choice could not have been adopted by Mr. Soland. Unlike those anxious and overstretching spirits who are miserable if a cause be decided against them, and who are ever distinguishable by a fidgety restlestness on the behalf of their clients, the sergeant presented an unvarying portrait of self-approving quietism. If a verdict went wrong, he regretted, but could not mourn, for he had done his best; and if a second (a rare event !) miscarried, he was soon diverted by the prompt succession of more fortunate exertions. Once and once only, he had been known to lose that equable command of temper for which he was so remarkable. He lost three verdicts successively. For twenty-four hours he was not the lawyer of calm and temperate dignity whose example had been quoted as a pattern for the bar. But, at length, he attributed his discomfitures, for he was slightly superstitious, to the introduction of a new coif, to which he had then lately treated himself, and immediately resuming the old, he commenced a career (for so it happened,) of unprecedented good fortune. This was the practised advocate who, cheered by the intelligence which Mr. Soland had intimated to him, and by a heavy special retainer, now appeared for the purpose of defeating the energies and tact of the crown lawyers.

The sergeant bowed graciously to Mortimer, surveying his client at the same moment with an earnestness which might be set down as well to the score of compassion as of intense penetration. But the keen look of the counsel was of the latter kind, for he could frequently discern by a glance whether his client were an innocent or a guilty man, and he was wont, without a word, to take his measures accordingly. Whether upon this occasion he had formed a favourable or an inauspicious conjecture, could not be discovered, for he took a seat with the utmost composure. A monotonous accompa-

niment of humphs and hahs not unfrequently attends the relation of a case to the most able pleaders.—The sergeant always made it a rule to abstain from any such ventriloquisms, (as he used to call them,) observing, that they had the effect of perplexing the speaker. A slight but significant inclination of the head, a sedate smile, or a symptom of profound attention, would occasionally be visible, but beyond these the sergeant permitted no gesture or interruption to disturb the thread of the history to which he was listening. Mr. Soland's narration was distinct, and his comments quite triumphant, but the sage whom he addressed said not a word. He looked, indeed, towards Mortimer when the circumstances of the forgery were detailed, but allowed no observation to break in upon the story. The account of the affair being at length finished, the sergeant was of course expected to give his opinion upon the facts. But there was no rashness nor pruriency in his manner. He drew from his pocket a ponderous and antique box, and having offered a pinch to his companions, returned it deliberately, and covered his face with both his hands.

"'Tis very strange," said he, after pausing a considerable time, "that a young gentleman should be taken from his home in this sudden manner. If the facts, Mr. Soland, be as you have stated them, this gentleman will be entitled to a copy of the indictment, and he will recover very heavy damages in an action on the case." And so saying, he fixed his shrewd eye again upon Mortimer, who, like a convicted culprit, looked dejected and confused.

"The Bank are not in the habit," continued the sergeant quite unmoved, "of proceeding upon such slight grounds as these. 'Tis impossible," added he with more confidence as Mortimer's agitation evidently increased. "I thought so, young gentleman," said the sergeant again, with great urbanity, "I thought so when I first saw you; there is something more. Part of your story remains untold. You have not even acquainted Mr. Soland with it."

Soland appeared astonished at this alteration in the case, but Mortimer remained silent.

"'Tis impossible for me to advise you," resumed the sergeant, "unless I am intrusted with the whole case. Your confidence will not be misplaced, for these matters

are never mentioned. I recollect—" continued he, "a man whom I defended, who was hanged for highway robbery, entirely through his assuring me of his innocence. Believing the poor fellow, I took a course which, although if he had not misled me, it would have tended to redeem his honour, yet cost him his life. Let me know the worst at once. I could have saved the man I have been speaking of."

"Could you?" said Mortimer, eagerly, to Mr. Soland's infinite amazement.

The sergeant retained his unbending coolness, and bowed in reply.

"Then I am guilty, cried Mortimer, with great agitation, "and for God's sake can any thing be done?"

"You must let me know those little events which you have suppressed, young gentleman," said the sergeant.

Mortimer related the whole matter, without concealing the rencontre at Newmarket.

"Is the prosecutor aware of this circumstance?" inquired the sergeant.

"He is," replied Mortimer.

"Young gentleman," said the great lawyer, "it would be an act of deceit on my part if I were to give you any hopes of answering this evidence; but cheer up, there may be faults in the indictment. You may depend upon my being at my post to render you all the help which my professional skill, small as it may be, can do on your behalf. Mr. Soland," continued the sergeant, reaching his hat, "you will not fail to let me have a copy of the indictment as early as possible before the trial, for I really feel an interest in the fate of this young gentleman. We must never despair. Keep up your spirits, Sir," added he, bidding Mortimer farewell, "many worse cases than this have been got rid of by a flaw in the proceedings. Mr. Soland, I wish you a good day. And so saying, the great advocate hastened to his carriage, which was ordered back to London without delay.

"I trust that you will not desert me, Sir," said Mortimer to Soland, as soon as the sergeant was gone.

"God forbid, Mr. Mortimer," returned the other, "that I should forsake you in the time of need! I own I should have been better pleased had you told me all, but let us pass over that, and consider seriously whether any thing can be done! Rely on it, I will do my best

for you, for I can hardly think now but that there must be some mistake."

A long and careful consultation was then held, which lasted for some hours, when Mr. Soland returned to London. The result of these deliberations will be related in the forthcoming chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

A DISCOVERY.

"The danger is past, as soon as you have burned the letter."
Letter to Lord Monteagle.

In consequence of the near approach of the assizes, it became necessary that steps should speedily be taken to rescue Mortimer from the danger which hung over him, if indeed, an event so fortunate were within the limits of possibility. It had been agreed upon by Mr. Soland and the prisoner, in the consultation mentioned at the close of our last chapter, that the former should procure an interview with Priminheere the prosecutor, and propose, (so great was the emergency,) that Byrdwood should be surrendered, upon condition of his foregoing the charge. Mr. Soland was not backward in executing this mission, and he accordingly waited upon the powerful magistrate, invested with full authority on the part of Mortimer, to make the painful sacrifice of the much loved and much coveted estate. This arrangement, he was fond enough to hope, might be the more easily accomplished, inasmuch as a debt of five thousand pounds still remained due in respect of the old mortgage, in consequence of the valueless notes which Priminheere had received. Here then would be an opportunity of gaining possession of the property, and extinguishing the incumbrance on the one side, and of saving the life of an unhappy youth on the other.

Priminheere, though he strove as far as possible to conceal his real sentiments, was struck with the proposal; he talked indeed about the public welfare, the heinousness of the crime which had been perpetrated, the risks and illegality of compounding a felony; but the suggestion of Mr. Soland sunk at once deeply into his mind. That wary lawyer saw that he had gained an ad-

vantage, though he feared that the boon sought for was too great to be so easily obtained. But Priminheere set so high a value upon the tender which had been made him, that before Mr. Soland's departure, he pledged himself that the matter should not be carried further; and on Mortimer's part, the secure and immediate possession of Byrdwood, together with all the deeds, for which he specially stipulated, were promised him. The possibility, nay the probability, that the Bank would refuse to be a party to any such compromise, never occurred to the impatient magistrate, nor did he reckon much upon the legal penalties which might attend such a dereliction of his duty as a citizen. Accustomed of late to succeed in all his pursuits, and to bear rule over all with whom he had to do, Priminheere blindly hastened into the arrangement; and Mr. Soland with equal precipitation, deemed that the affair was concluded and his friend safe. That a practitioner so keen and experienced as he undoubtedly was, should have committed such an oversight, can only be attributed to the extreme anxiety under which he was labouring, and his confidence in the promises of Priminheere; certain it is, that he was swayed upon this occasion by one feeling alone, which was to save Mortimer at all hazards, from the imminent danger of his situation.

We must now carry the reader forward to the week before Mortimer's trial. Notwithstanding the most strenuous efforts on the part of Priminheere, the Bank determined that an offender, who had in their judgment been deemed worthy of prosecution, should not thus suddenly evade the arm of justice. He was complimented for his supposed humanity, but received information at the same time, that the Bank had taken up the matter, and that the criminal could not be allowed to go unpunished. Priminheere found himself involved in a fresh difficulty; and whilst he was designing a new plan for accomplishing the object of his wishes, he was surprised by a visit from no other than Albert Moonshine.

Albert had been pondering very much upon the melancholy event which had happened in his neighbourhood, and having for some time thrown aside every hostile feeling towards Mortimer, he now felt as strong an interest in his behalf as the indolence of his nature would allow. We may recollect, that Jones the black-

smith made mention of some papers which the village Squire had been known to have picked up some years since. Albert remembered that these were of no slight importance, as far as the mortgage on Byrdwood was concerned, and he supplicated his mother, that she would make a search for the desired documents. At length after a diligent ransacking of every letter and parcel which Mrs. Moonshine possessed, two or three papers were discovered, bound up with red tape, which in the minds both of the lady and her son, threw very considerable light upon the subject. The following letter however, from Dell and Head, the lawyers to the late Mr. Mortimer, was of a nature which could not fail to excite surprise in the most indifferent.

"Sir,

"We beg to acknowledge your check for 1072*l.*, the amount of a mortgage effected by you, upon Byrdwood House. We will see to the application of the money, and to the due cancelment of the deed by the present mortgagee. With many thanks for your prompt attention to us, We remain, Sir,

"Your faithful and obliged humble servants,

Signed, "Dell and Head."

"*April*, 22, 1815."

It will be recollected, that the parties whose names were subscribed, acted at that time as solicitors for Mr. Mortimer; and it therefore became their duty, after payment of the mortgage money, to possess themselves of the security.

Moonshine declared that he would immediately carry this letter to Priminheere; and in spite of his mother's remonstrances, he snatched up his hat with unprecedented industry, and hastened to the dwelling of the much dreaded magistrate, as we have above related.

Priminheere received the Squire with great coldness. The rebuke which Albert had given him when solicited to oppose Mortimer at the Borough election, as well as the part which the Squire was known to have taken in the late rescue, were circumstances which made the present visit extremely out of season. But Priminheere could not have foreseen the business which brought Albert to his door, although the latter full well appreciated the indifference with which he was treated.

A bow of freezing civility had almost disconcerted Moonshine. It was accompanied by that look of disquieting carelessness with which the great are accustomed to repel obnoxious intruders. It conveyed the meaning of the words—what is your pleasure with me, as truly as though they had been spoken.

"I,—that is to say, my mother has found, Sir," said Albert, "a letter relating to the mortgage upon Byrdwood House."

Priminheere started, and turned pale. He could not command his agitation, but fortunately for him neither the eye nor the mind of his visiter was quick-sighted.

"If there should be any mistake as to poor Mortimer, Sir," continued Mr. Moonshine, "I am sure you will not press matters against him."

"Don't talk to me of Mortimer, Sir," exclaimed Priminheere much hurried,—"Give me that letter."

"No—I can hardly do that—you don't know yet of what consequence it is."

The innocent and even vacant manner which accompanied these words of the Squire only served to enrage the Magistrate.

"Give me the letter, Sir," he repeated,—"what's the use of your bringing me a letter, if I'm not to see it."

Alarmed by the gesticulations which attended this speech, Moonshine instinctively looked towards the door, and retreated in that direction.

"My good friend," cried Priminheere, under great alarm, "don't you see how unreasonable it is to come here with a letter and not to allow me to see it?"

"So you should have seen it," returned Albert, "only —only you seem so disturbed."

"Well—now then, I am calm," said the Magistrate.

"Calm!" ejaculated the Squire, fixing his eyes upon the inflamed visage and swelling lips of his companion. "Besides," added he, "I don't know that I ought to give up such a letter as this—there's a complete receipt for the mortgage, and——"

"Give it me then," exclaimed Priminheere, unable to contain himself—"it's mine."

"No— it is'nt yours," returned Moonshine—"it belongs to Mortimer, if any body."

"That's the same thing,—I'm entitled to it," said the Magistrate.

"No—begging your pardon, Sir, it is'nt," replied Albert, wonderfully collected—"it belongs to the late Mr. Mortimer's estate, I picked it up some years ago. But as I was saying, if it should turn out that there has been some mistake, will you set it right by interceding for this poor gentleman?"

"How can I interfere as a magistrate, Mr. Moonshine? When the Bank have determined to punish this man for passing forged notes, what can I do?—I can't save all the criminals in the country."

"No," resumed Albert,—"but you know if there has been a blunder—you have been the means, Sir, I don't mean any offence, of putting Mr. Mortimer in his present sad state."

"Give me the letter, then, I again and again demand of you," cried Priminheere; "tell me the contents—any thing—only don't stand there and lecture me upon what I can't help."

"I really must wish you good morning, Mr. Priminheere," returned the other; "you do not seem calm enough to hear the contents." And so saying, Albert seized the handle of the door, but Priminheere instantly stepped forward, drew his visiter away with some force, and passed the lock.—"Now, Sir," cried he fiercely, and pulling a pistol from a drawer in the apartment—"will you oblige me with a sight of that letter or not?"

The violence which had been used was of itself sufficient to have confounded Moonshine, but the sight of that formidable weapon which had occasioned his untimely illness at the duel, entirely overcame him. He staggered backward, and fell on the floor.

"For God's sake, Mr. Moonshine—what is the matter? What are you doing?" said Priminheere, trembling excessively, "I have not shot you, you are not touched."

"Here, here," cried Albert, holding out the letter, which Priminheere grasped greedily.

"Then get up, Mr. Moonshine," said the Magistrate, unlocking the door, and hurrying over the contents of the paper with the most intense agitation—"There," said he, "Mr. Moonshine," tossing the letter into the fire—"make yourself easy—it is nothing—it was quite an old affair. Poor Mortimer! It had no reference to him. Are you better, Sir?"

"Yes,—but my letter," exclaimed Albert—observing that the important document was irrecoverably consumed, and that Priminheere stood guardian even over its ashes.

"The letter, I tell you, my good friend, was of no moment whatever. Mr. Moonshine," repeated the Magistrate, assuming a coolness to which his palpitating heart was a stranger, "I really must make an apology for my strange conduct, but you must feel on your part for my curiosity on such a subject as this, especially when a neighbour's life is at stake.

"Then that cannot be the same letter, Sir, which you have burnt," said Albert, perplexed and distressed.

"On my honour it is," said the Magistrate ringing the bell.

"Then you had no right to destroy it," replied Albert, whose vexation prevailed for the moment over his fears of the pistol, which Priminheere had replaced in the drawer.

"It was, in fact, mine," returned the master of the house, pulling the bell strongly. "James," said he, upon the appearance of a servant, "let my horse be got ready. —Mr. Moonshine, I am sure you will excuse me."

"But the letter, Mr. Priminheere."

"Pray show this gentleman out," said the Magistrate to his servant. "Sir, I wish you a good day."

"Give me back my letter then."

"Sir," replied Priminheere, "that matter has already been explained—James do your duty and show Mr. Moonshine to the door." And after a few more ineffectual struggles, Priminheere fairly got rid of his troublesome guest.

But instead of riding, he retired heavy and struck with dismay, to his private room. The violence into which he had been betrayed, he knew would redound to his discredit; the destruction of the letter would cause his conduct to be more strictly investigated, and he was not aware of any scheme by which he could impeach Albert's word with success. Difficulties were gathering around him, and the day of trial was near at hand. Priminheere had reasons for believing that the issue of Mortimer's case would raise a clamour in the neighbourhood, which might be the occasion of serious if not fatal consequences to himself. Of the conviction of the prisoner, he had,

moreover, no doubt, so that the danger which he most apprehended was now most imminent. He had failed in his attempt to gain Byrdwood by promising to abstain from a prosecution, but he considered that with a moderately able management he might yet be able to effect his design, by pledging himself to the widow and her daughter that he would beg for the life of their relation. He further resolved on pressing upon them the value of his services and intercession; and not to withhold from him his due, he had no intention of disappointing them in respect of the application, although he was fully aware of the uselessness of an appeal for mercy. He accordingly rode out with the full intention of tendering his most earnest efforts at Barywood in favour of its unfortunate owner, together with the debt of five thousand pounds which still remained due. For these offers he expected in return, the estate and the deeds relating to it, of course, including that which he had so reluctantly given up. If he should succeed in persuading Mrs. Mortimer and the prisoner's sister into an acceptance of these terms, he anticipated no opposition on the part of Mortimer, and thus his triumph would be complete.

CHAPTER XVI.

REMORSE.

"Qu'on l'empêche: cours, vole, et fais qu'on le ramène,
Je veux; Je veux qu'il vive.
Durs mais trop vains remords."

Le Comte d'Essex.

Mr. Fastenon was the minister of the chapel to which the father of the Priminheeres had long been an attached member. He had also been the guide of the young men for many years, and still held a kind of parental sway over the mind of Charles. James soon seceded from these counsels, and at the time of his marriage even deserted altogether the faith in which he had been nurtured. This apostacy deeply affected the pious guardian of his youth, who foresaw the dangers into which the influence of wealth, and pride, and change, was likely to plunge him. Mr. Fastenon was the pattern of a Christian minister, he was neither a Pharisee on the one hand, nor a libertine on the other.

He neither denounced every cheerful act as deserving of censure, nor did he sanction the presence of crime, by holding out the doctrine of plenary indulgence. Thus nicely balancing his conduct, he gained the esteem of all, and was not only held as an upright and zealous pastor in his own immediate circle, but also by the surrounding clergymen, and the very bishop of the diocese in which he lived. At first, indeed, his high repute and character excited jealousy, and invited persecution. The customary scorn of sensualists, idlers, and sceptics, was levelled at the purity of his demeanour, and many inconsiderate tongues were loud in their abuse of the new Puritan. For it is ever a most convenient handle for the agents of thoughtless persecution, to lay hold on some splendid example of priestly profligacy, in order to decry at once the man and the doctrine. Mr. Fastenoh was a Calvinist. It so happened, that a person who preached the doctrines of Calvin, had sadly misconducted himself a few years before. Calvinism was, therefore, in ill favour at the coming of the new minister. It would have been the same, had the delinquent been a preacher of any other creed. Priminheere, too, was at one time a Calvinist, and his course of life had doubtless brought obloquy upon those who maintained the principles which he so unsteadily professed. But the new pastor soon reconciled all parties, and despite of his Calvinism, there was not one within ten miles, whose reproofs were more dreaded, or commendations more coveted.

It was the day upon which Mortimer was to be tried for his life at Bedford, and the minister was sitting alone in his study. He had been meditating on the crime of forgery, and had arrived at the conclusion adopted by so many others, that the severity of the punishment did not diminish the frequency of the offence. He was awaiting too, with the utmost anxiety, tidings of the fate of Mortimer. The most absurd and contradictory reports were in circulation throughout the village. Some said that the culprit had pleaded guilty, others that his acquittal had been ordered by the judge, others again, that his address to the jury had produced a most striking alteration in his favour, whilst some averred that the trial had been put off altogether.

It was a day of earnest agitation in the neighbour-

hood. All who could spare their time and money had gone to the circuit town to gratify their curiosity with regard to the prisoner, and to have a peep at the judge. Those who remained behind, greedily confided in the report of any straggler who ventured to give them intelligence of the proceedings. Mr. Fastenon was informed from time to time of these inundating rumours; and although much interested in their subject, he could not help interposing a caution against the universal credulity which was gaining ground in the parish. Had a report arrived of Mortimer's execution, there were not wanting those who would have credited it without faltering, and propagated it as fearlessly. It was in vain that the pastor assured his neighbours of the probable truth, that the trial would last until night, and that no intelligence could be relied upon until a late hour. The gaping expectations of the crowd were wound up to the utmost; and, at length, for want of a fresh supply of food for their curiosity, they began to form themselves into parties in favour of the conviction on the one hand, of the acquittal on the other.

Whilst Mr. Fastenon was thus engaged in dispensing his advice, and commanding, as well as he could his own desire for news, a messenger galloped up to his house in great haste, with a pressing request from Mr. Priminheere, that he would come to him without the least delay.

"From Mr. Priminheere?" exclaimed the good man, struck with surprise and consternation.

"Master's very bad indeed, Sir," replied the servant; "he has been ailing for some time, but to-night he's so bad that the doctors think he can't last long."

"And has Mr. Priminheere sent for me?" inquired the pastor.

"He has ordered me to go for you, Sir, and not to come away from your house without you. If you please to ride Sir; I am to go home on foot."

"Then God's will be done!" said the minister with deep feeling and solemnity.

In less than an hour he was at the bedside of the sick magistrate. Priminheere showed evident satisfaction at seeing him, but the gleam was momentary, it was like a single ray of light amidst the deepest darkness. The reverend elder shrunk back with horror, as he gazed

upon the fear-stricken, ghastly countenance of the sufferer.

"It's come to this at last," said Priminheere, with a voice of despondency which forced tears from his former friend.

"You may recover, my dear Sir," replied the minister, hardly knowing what comment to make on the scene, and still ignorant of the cause of his sudden summons.

"Never," said Priminheere; "this is quite right; it is as it should be;" added he, with a look of resolute defiance.

"May I inquire the purpose which occasioned my being called to this sad sick bed?" asked Mr. Fastenon.

"I sent for you, Sir," said Priminheere, "to hear some short account of my crimes, and my future destiny. Yes, for you, Sir, my old pastor, before I die. I have sent the women out of the way."

"Of your crimes, Mr. Priminheere!" the minister could not help repeating the confounding word; "of your crimes!"

"Has any news been heard of Mortimer?" inquired the sufferer, pulling a bell violently. "Has any thing been heard of Mr. Mortimer?" said he rapidly to the servant who came in.

He was assured that no tidings had been received. Mr. Fastenon corroborated this.

"There is no chance of his getting off, is there?" again asked Priminheere, with a countenance which betrayed a yet lingering hope. But the pastor could not inform his interrogator.

"No chance! nothing in his favour!" said the magistrate. "I have just sent off another lawyer to see what can be done. All the world would I give to save him. Oh horrible! horrible!"

"My dear Sir, explain yourself; let me intreat you to communicate your sorrow to me," said the minister.

"I sent for you, Sir," returned Priminheere, "for that very purpose. I must have your curse before I go hence. The measure will not be complete without it."

"Pray, Mr. Priminheere, be more calm," said the minister; "the servant of God curses no man."

"Yes, but you must curse me when you hear," said James Priminheere. "Yet I could not die till I saw you."

"Let no man despair, Mr. Priminheere," said Fastenon, "while the mercy of God is so plenteous, and so freely given."

"An apostate can hope for no mercy," cried Priminheere.

"You mistake the expression, Mr. Priminheere," exclaimed the minister. "A man who leaves his faith from conscientious motives, and adopts another, we do not condemn as an apostate. I am sure that when you left your former creed, you did so under the idea that the Church of England was more perfect."

"I sold my soul's worth for money—for a high marriage—for pomp—for grandeur—for iniquity," cried the suffering magistrate.

James Priminheere had held so little communion with the dissenters during the late years of his stay amongst them, that although his pastor had been accustomed to expostulate with him occasionally, he had never noticed the precise time when his disciple finally quitted the profession of Calvinism.

"Did you leave us upon your marriage with Miss Hamilton?" asked the minister.

"I did," returned the magistrate, "and I deserted you for the sake of lucre and ambition; that was apostacy, was it not," continued he, desperately maintaining the despair which had enthralled him.

"That was wrong, indeed," said Mr. Fastenon: "I fear though to call it apostacy. I fear to judge any man."

"It was apostacy, good Mr. Fastenon," exclaimed Priminheere; "you forget I had a father, a man who would have parted with his principles only with his life."

Here the pain of the sufferer became so excessive, that an awful silence ensued for some minutes. A servant now came with the intelligence that the judge had been left summing up on Mortimer's case. The minister would have forborne the intelligence, but the magistrate caught at the name of Mortimer.

"Is it so? Is he convicted then? Is it all over?"

Priminheere's agitation determined the minister to impart the news without delay.

"Is there any hope then?" he asked carelessly.

"I'll tell you, good Sir," continued he, "come nearer to me. I have been the occasion of that man's death.

It's of no moment to me, for the time of my stay here is short indeed; but I would give all my estate to save him."

"How is this? What strange temptations have overtaken the son of my old friend!" said the weeping pastor.

"Get a pen and ink, friend, and paper," said Priminheere, "and write down while I have breath to tell you, the sad circumstances of this story. Let no one intrude. It is for you alone. When I am dead, you can do as you like with it, only save Mr. Mortimer, if it be in the power of man to do it."

The magistrate's request was instantly obeyed, and Mr. Fastenon wrote from his dictating as follows:

"You have been told that I abandoned my religion for the sake of fortune. I wanted that money for which I was to barter my honour, my faith, and my happiness. My estate was involved, deeply encumbered. It was with difficulty that my father maintained it unimpaired. Charles required some assistance in the world, and my own habits were extravagant, far exceeding our former style of living. Thus, from bad to worse, I was at length inextricably plunged into a dilemma, from which poverty and exposure could be but the only results. Thus situated, I sought the hand of Miss Jane Hamilton, my present wife. She, justly enough, repelled my advances. It was no secret, that Mortimer was the rival, the favoured candidate. Poor Mr. Moonshine never had any chance, nor indeed had I, until the snare which I laid succeeded. I urged on the duel between Moonshine and Mortimer, privately indeed, but with certainty; and although the accomplishment of that scheme partially failed, I managed to give such a colour to the event, as materially to alter Mrs. Hamilton's opinion of her intended son-in-law. And now I proceed to a disclosure which, but that I feel death approaching, I know not that I should have ever dared to reveal. That which I direct you to write, Mr. Fastenon, is uttered under the influence of a crisis which I can no longer avert.

"Dell and Head the lawyers, whom every one knows, became very friendly with me soon after the difference which caused old Mr. Mortimer to withdraw his concerns from their management. In the course of various conversations with them, I gained by accident the in-

telligence, that the former proprietor of Byrdwood had mortgaged his estate for one thousand pounds, but that the deed had been mislaid. A dreadful temptation assailed me. I might profit by this disaster, and revenge myself upon the unfortunate Mortimer. I was sufficiently acquainted with the lawyers to persuade them to search out this deed for me, and even to intrust me with the perusal of it. Taking it home by a trick, I altered the figures, by placing five between the figure one and the cyphers, so that one thousand became fifteen thousand."

"What was that trick?" inquired the Minister.

"I pretended," continued Priminheere, "that I would buy the equity of redemption, and that I would send the deed of assignment abroad, to the mortgagee, in order that he might sign it. The mortgagee did indeed live abroad, but, alas! he neither executed an assignment, nor did I ever send any according to my promise."

"You committed a forgery, then?" exclaimed the minister.

"I forged the assignment itself, as well as the alteration in the original mortgage deed," continued the dying magistrate: "the whole affair was a fabrication. The lawyers, who were so careless as scarcely to know whether the sum was one or twenty thousand, and of whose ignorance I was well aware, put the deed forward by my orders; and I expected to possess myself quietly of Byrdwood, and by allowing its ejected tenants a trifling income, I hoped in some measure to calm my conscience. But just at that juncture, Mortimer won an immense sum at the gaming-table, and threatened to pay off his incumbrances. On the very day of his return home, I led my bride to the altar, and no longer stood in need of the estate of another to save me from ruin. But then there was the forged deed; I dared not give it up. I knew, that if I were compelled to do so, I should never afterwards be happy till I had regained it. The day of retribution, however, did come; it came too surely for both of us, for myself and my wretched neighbour; he paid me in forged notes; and I was compelled to give up the false writing. No pains have I spared, even to the destruction of this poor gentleman's life, to repossess myself of the instrument. I fondly hoped that terror would long since have compelled him to surrender

it, but the blundering of my officers occasioned his escape from custody, and the most vexatious accidents occurred afterwards to fix the doom of justice upon him.

"Yesterday evening—yesterday it was, that I at length triumphed. There is the forged deed, in that drawer, Mr. Fastenon;—take it, I beseech you, if it will save the prisoner's life. Yesterday evening, I say, I went to Byrdwood, ostensibly to see the afflicted family, but in reality to seize upon this document, and to sooth them by expectations of my interceding for Mortimer's life. God knows, I should never have succeeded in any such mission. Under the colour of an unpaid mortgage, and a right to take possession, the unhappy inmates of that place delivered the precious writing to me. Fondly did I grasp it, determining, so soon as I should reach home, to cram it into the flames. But at that instant the racking pains, which will shortly end my sad career, admonished me to gain my house before it were too late. And now I am going—I am going—Mr. Fastenon—"

"Stay, I intreat, I adjure you!" interrupted the minister, anticipating the desperate curse which hung on the self-damning lips of the sufferer.

"You repent of your sad deeds—do you, not, friend?"

"Repentance! What is that for a man who has scarcely an hour of life?" cried Priminheere. "What's repentance to me who have murdered my nrighbour?"

"He is not yet convicted; perhaps he may be saved," said the pastor.

"Never—never—never," ejaculated the magistrate, staring wildly around.

"You did not cause his apprehension, Sir, did you?" said the minister.

"Listen, and write once more," said Priminheer. "I forged the assignment, without which he would never have committed the dreaful deed which is to be atoned for by his life. I was the active agent in making him a prisoner, and I discovered by my own diligent inquiries, the evidence which will be fatal to him at his trial this day. Judge what claims I have to repentance."

"Yet is there hope for the most abandoned," replied the minister, in a calm and soothing tone.

"Never! Mr Fastenon," cried Priminheere. "I have eased my mind in some measure by sending for you, but that is all; there the consolation ends! And now

death is at hand! I shall see my family no more! I have determined to die alone, and go down to the gulf which is yawning for me!"

"God of his infinite mercy forbid!" exclaimed the pious preacher.

Some one entered the room as he uttered these words, and whispered something in his ear.

"That is something about Mortimer! Why conceal any thing from a dying man?" exclaimed Priminheere.

The minister was silent.

"Tell me, I command you!" cried the magistrate. "He is acquitted—hurreh!" Priminheere's phrenzied laugh electrified the minister. "Where is he? let me see him," continued the dying sufferer. "Come back to your estate, injured man! Here are the forged deeds! here—here—an acquittal! Return to your friends, your country, your mother—"

The family, apprized of Priminheere's desperate condition, rushed into the room.

"Is he free—out of prison?" continued the magistrate. "Who are these? Where 's Mortimer?"

"Alas!" exclaimed Mrs. Priminheere; "my love; the young man is not acquitted."

"Madam, forbear, I beseech you," said the minister; "do you not see that he is wandering?"

"Ah! I see it," said Priminheere, with a firm voice. "It must be so. He is convicted! Speak!"

"He is convicted, indeed," said the minister, taking the magistrate affectionately by the hand; but we may, perhaps, save him yet."

"Convicted!" exclaimed Priminheere, sinking back upon his pillow. "Mr. Fastenon, come hither."

"I am here, close to you," said the pastor.

"Take the forged deeds; you know what to do. Come, death! come, vengeance!"—

Mrs. Priminheere was borne out of the room. There was a thrilling pause.

"'Tis past!" said the minister, bowing down his head; "the spirit is returned to God who gave it!"

The eyes of the dead were closed, for James Priminheere had indeed departed; and the room was darkened. The minister retired, overwhelmed with grief. His services were not wanted by the family, who cared not

how soon the schismatic, as they called him, should quit the house.

Dr. Dundrosy made a visit of condolence to the widow as soon as he conceived it decent that he should do so, and he omitted not to make the due inquiries at Mrs. Hamilton's. The inmates of Alderbury did not fail to appreciate this mark of attention from the rector, and the solitary relict (for Priminheere had no children) felt pleased with the sympathy which she had received from a pillar of the legitimate church.

Great was the industry which Mrs. Hamilton called into action to throw a shade over the last hours of her son-in-law. The whisperings of the servants, and the conjectures of those who had neither seen nor heard, gave rise to the most unpleasant rumours in the neighbourhood. Mrs. Hamilton had provided against the statements, or rather, the expected disclosures of Mr. Fastenon, by donouncing him as a fanatic; whilst the good minister, on his part, was most reluctant to indulge the popular curiosity either with mysterious hints or unnecessary revelations. Thus disappointed, the people had no refuge except in speculation, and this liberty they exercised with their accustomed boldness. It was averred for a fact, that Satan had removed the obnoxious magistrate to his own cave, and two ancients of the village were heard to declare that a cloud, charged with brimstone, had fallen on Priminheere's house on the very night of his decease. Others asserted, that he had died in a state of furious delirium, and scrupled not to charge him with every deed of darkness under the sun, murder not being spared from the catalogue.

It was the peculiar province of the mistress of Alderbury to strangle these reports, both for her own sake as well as that of her widowed daughter, who was likely to return under the shelter of maternal dominion. Mrs. Hamilton instructed her agents. Dr. Dundrosy was heard to declare from the pulpit, that the neighbourhood had lost a distinguished member of the church, a kind husband, and a warm friend. The eulogium of the doctor was appalling, not that its contents were undeserved, for Priminheere was neither severe nor haughty in his family circle; but praise at a time like this, when Mortimer's fate was attributed to the deceased magistrate, came like a monstrous tale upon the village audience.

The apothacary, who had for years derived an annual fortune from the pills and liquid treasures he was in the habit of dispensing at the Park, felt himself called on to vindicate his patrons, and was known to utter wonders. All who were in the special pay of the great house, the retainers of all kinds, agreed in one common story. Its burthen was, that, after intense suffering from inflammation, their friend and master went off peaceful as a lamb. Mrs. Hamilton too, had the tact to forgive and retain the babbling domestics, first reproving their indiscretion, and compelling them to deny their own assertions. But of the written confession, and the forged writings, no one knew excepting the minister. These he had resolved to keep in profound secrecy till the day should arrive when it might be necessary to use them with effect. Thus buried in mystery, this great scene of death was, for the present, kept sacred from the vulgar.

On the following Sunday Mr. Fastenon alluded to the event which had happened. But his allusions were general, and his application was mysterious. He dwelt on the awfulness of sudden departure, on the deceitfulness of riches, on the dangers of an unsettled faith. He spoke of the evils which menaced the careless; of a clear conscience; and the horrors of an impenitent death-bed. Yet, when he came to the scene itself, which had excited so much conversation, he seemed to check himself, and stopped short, regardless of the curiosity which had brought throngs to his weekly meeting. He shook his head, as if weighed down by the awfulness of his subject; he shed tears, (it was with the holy dread of the Christian, and his tears were those of sincerity,) and he passed hastily to some general topic, which he illustrated with more than his usual eloquence. His hearers retired inspired with awe and astonishment, yet still curious and dissatisfied; and the wayward spectators, who had come big with expectation, left the chapel more than half in anger, though they could not but admire the talent of the preacher, and acknowledge the purity of his doctrines.

"How very great Mr. Fastenon was!" exclaimed a veteran of the meeting.

"Very great indeed!" was the instinctive reply from another ancient.

"I think I never heard him so great," repeated the

first. "What a beautiful afternoon!" she observed, almost in the same breath.

"Oh! Mr. Fitful," said the second, "how do you do?—and how is Mrs. Fitful, and Miss Clara, and all the dear little ones? We have heard," continued she, shaking her head, "great things to-day!"

"Great things, indeed, Mrs. Quack," responded Mr. Fitful; "only one would have liked to have heard a little more about that poor man."

"Ah, indeed, yes," said Mrs. Quack; "but we must not be too prying, you know, Mr. Fitful."

"Very true, Mrs. Quack; still, this was a funeral sermon, and it is usual to say as much about the deceased as possible. I don't know what Mrs. Fitful will say about it when I go home."

"No good, I'm afraid," said Mrs. Quack.

"Not a word about Mr. Mortimer," said an elderly, grave-looking, spectacled personage, who was slowly following the stream of the crowd to his companions.

"Not a word; very strange—so unsatisfactory!" said one of those who was next his elbow.

"All in the dark!" exclaimed the first speaker, "as much as though there was nothing the matter."

"But there is something the matter; we all know that," observed a third.

"What it is exactly nobody knows; and one would not wish to say any thing unchristian, especially on a Sunday," replied the first; "but the truth is, that people speak out quite plainly upon the subject."

The near approach of Mr. Fastenon instantly checked this talk. A respectful bow from all gave homage to the minister. He passed on at a quick pace, anxious to escape the notice and reverence of the crowd.

But his departure was a signal for a general converse. All the lads and lasses who had come from a distance to meet at the chapel, all the folk of the village who had congregated there for conscience sake or otherwise, the matronly dames and the sober-speaking sires, the gaping stranger and the giddy youth of Baal—each with eyes, ears, and mouths expanded to the fullest, partook of the intelligence which was dispersed on all sides.

"Were you at the assizes yesterday, then?" a respectably-looking person was heard to ask; and he immediately received an answer in the affirmative.

A group soon gathered round the man of news. "Tell me how Mr. Mortimer behaved," exclaimed the first speaker with eagerness. "He conducted himself," said the person thus appealed to, "with great firmness throughout. You could not see a muscle move, unless it was when the witnesses from Newmarket spoke to his having passed notes before at that place. Then, indeed, he was abashed for a moment. But he soon recovered, and put his questions with much calmness. Two or three times it was thought he would get off, for the Counsel, a sergeant, I believe, made some capital objections, but it wouldn't do, and the trial went on. Well—some of the witnesses bungled a little, and upon this the sergeant bothered 'em a good deal more, but they managed to get through, and a terrible tale it was for poor Mr. Mortimer." Here the ejaculations of "Poor gentleman," were very audible throughout the assemblage. "Well," continued the speaker, "at last the evidence was over for the prosecution, and the Judge was very cross indeed, because so much time had been spent, (but some said it was because his dinner wasn't ready,) and then all eyes were fixed on the prisoner. Every body expected such a defence, when, who would think it? Mr. Mortimer declined to say one word. The fact was, he was a dead man, for the thing was too strong for him; but still, people usually say something, however desperate their case may be. The sergeant then got up, and called several witnesses to character, but the Judge soon leaned over his high desk, and said, that the jury need not hear any more upon that subject, for every body knew that Mr. Mortimer had been in a very high condition of life, and then he began to talk to the jury. He said that character was of little use when the case was clear, and that here the evidence was so strong that he believed it to be impossible that they could do otherwise than convict him. 'However,' says he, 'gentlemen, if you have any doubt upon your minds, you will be pleased to give the prisoner the benefit of that doubt.' I never could make out what people mean by saying that the judge is counsel for the prisoner. Well—the jury made very short work of it; they just turned round in their box, and immediately found the verdict of guilty. You might have heard a pin drop. The judge looked distressed, as well he might be; the

crown counsel seemed dreadfully sorrowful,—though that was all hypocrisy, for they were thinking of their next cases; but the sergeant's countenance presented a melancholy picture indeed; I am sure he need not have been so sorry, for no man could have taken more pains for his client. As it is, my opinion is, that something he said staggered the judge, for I saw the pen going very fast, as if he was taking down what the sergeant was saying. Well—there was such a silence, I would have given any thing to have been outside the court, and when I ventured to look up, there was the chaplain of the gaol, as black as he could be, in his robes, looking so solemn and mournful. At last the judge gets up, and leaning over, whispers something to the officer underneath, who immediately addressed the prisoner, thus:—'Roger Mortimer, what have you to say, why the court should not give you judgment to die according to law?' The prisoner made no reply, but only bowed. Then the officer made a sign, and the crier made proclamation. 'Oyez, oyez, oyez.—All manner of persons are hereby strictly commanded to keep silence while my lord the king's justice gives judgment upon the prisoner, upon pain of imprisonment. God save the King.' Then the judge, with his black cap on, addressed our poor neighbour, and told him what a heinous offence he had been guilty of, and how he might have ruined hundreds of poor persons by his conduct. And then he leaned back in his seat, so cut up. None of us round could help crying. Mr. Mortimer seemed the least affected of any. Well—the judge made a terrible sermon of it, and told him that he must expect no mercy on this side of the grave, but that he must make his peace with God in company with the reverend clergyman on his right hand. And then he passed the usual sentence, and Mr. Mortimer was taken away, and the court was adjourned; and from what I could see there was as much laughing and talking among the great ones as if nothing had happened."

A general feeling of compassion was manifested by the crowd who had been fortunate enough to hear the intelligence, and the orator was repeatedly asked if he thought there was any hope. He shook his head. "Poor gentleman!" said he, "you should have seen the judge; he is a dead man, as sure as we are all living here."

The party then separated, bestowing their most hearty commendations on the teller of the news, whom they could not help comparing with the preacher who had just refused to indulge their curiosity.

"It's so much better to tell all; I hate secrets," cried an old woman in the rear rank, who, however, spoke the real sentiments of nearly all who were present.

CHAPTER XVII.

A BRIEFLESS BARRISTER.

"Shew me what thou'lt do;
Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear thyself?
Woo't drink up Esil? eat a crocodile?
I'll do't." *Hamlet.*

CHARLES PRIMINHEERE arrived too late to witness the last moments of his brother. When he reached the house which had been the scene of so many discussions between himself and his deceased relative, nearly a whole day had elapsed since the last struggle. The presence of Charles, too, was not agreeable to Mrs. Priminheere, nor to the family at Alderbury, for he still adhered to the faith in which he had been educated, and this was holden in detestation by those who now held the dominion. He, therefore, left the country as soon as his brother's remains had been committed to the tomb, and retired to the peaceful solitude of his chambers. It had been his intention to have proceeded to Byrdwood, but the sudden news of Mortimer's conviction induced him to forego his visit at such a season of distress, and he accordingly contented himself with sending a letter to Miss Mortimer, assuring her of his unalterable affection, and of his resolution to strain every nerve to procure a remission of her brother's sentence. He expressed this determination in the most delicate and soothing terms, and returned to London with a full intention of carrying his pledge into effect.

It is customary for the judge who passes sentence upon a prisoner, to direct that it shall be carried into effect on a day named by himself, and he writes down this order upon the calendar. The fatal abbreviation of sus. per col. which means, "let him be hanged by the neck," appeared opposite to Mortimer's name when

the circuit broke up at Bedford, and a fortnight was allowed him to prepare for the last great change. Terrific and startling intelligence is rarely taken to heart till the danger is so near as to baffle incredulity. So many and various are the chances of escaping the passing cloud, that until its thunders are heard and its torrents descend, the careless observer is sceptical and indifferent. Mortimer's doom was received in his neighbourhood as news which no one could credit; his conviction had caused a shock, but the threatening certainty of his punishment roused up every tender feeling, and provoked the strongest sentiments of compassion. Lamentations were heard on every side, regrets burst forth from all classes and conditions of society, and even Albert Moonshine was heard to say that he would give half his estate to save the prisoner. We pass by the sorrows of his family; they were such as no fidelity of detail can depict, nor vividness of colouring portray; they were the secret, silent miseries of the broken-hearted. A week passed away, and the numbers increased who knew the impending event, and deplored its approach; but no one stirred in the work of humanity. It might have been through ignorance, through indolence, through despair; yet so it was, that pity and tears were all the benefits which Mortimer as yet derived from the universal feeling. A few days more, and he would be irretrievably lost. The judge had decided, the government had not been petitioned, and the minister of the gaol was daily impressing upon the mind of the convict, the hopelessness of a mitigated penalty. The peasant sauntered home at night, and talked to his wife of the sad scene which was at hand; the wealthy tradesman descanted on the rigours of capital punishment, yet sipped his wine in idleness, and went no further. The greedy gossips of the village wrung their hands and sobbed aloud, but what could ignorance effect? A first row might, and doubtless would have been secured at the place of execution by some of the compassionate throng, but not a hand would have been lifted up to save the object of general interest.

The Reverend Mr. Fastenon had not been thus supine; with the fullest information he could procure, and the deeds which the dying Priminheere had intrusted to his care, he lost no time in proceeding to the next

town, whither the condemning judge had gone to administer the law. Here the character of the great magistrate was changed; he sat at these assizes to decide cases between private individuals, and had no concern with the calendar of death; the business too being lighter than usual, he had soon despatched the hungry cause list, and was now enjoying a temporary reprieve from his labours.

Always accessible, and even gratified by an opportunity of redressing complaints or promoting justice, the learned and upright judge admitted the minister to his presence without difficulty. It was, however, easy enough to perceive that any subject would have been more acceptable than one which involved the revision of a sentence. It had been a sentence, too, of the most painful description; deeply considered both in and out of court, and resolved upon after weighing every argument which humanity could suggest in favour of the criminal. If ever it were proper to be inflexible in enforcing a sentence, the judge had deemed this a fitting occasion, and Mortimer's fate had been determined upon the grounds of public policy, as well as the dictates of offended justice. Thus there were the sorrows of a rejected petitioner in prospect on the one hand, and the melancholy task of a refusal on the other.

The judge listened with temper and patience to the history which Mr. Fastenon related with equal precision and earnestness, but as soon as the minister had come to the death-bed scene, and the confessions of Priminheere, he seemed to be very much moved. The pastor seized that which he conceived to be the most auspicious moment, for beseeching the judge to interpose in favour of Mortimer, and did not fail to enlarge again and again upon the awful event which had marked the close of Priminheere's life.

"The unfortunate young man would not have committed the offence, had it not been for the crime of another. He was ruined, my lord, by the iniquity of the deceased; this is the very case, which above all others seems to call for mercy."

The judge lent the most grave and humane attention to these zealous exclamations of the minister, and patiently awaited his conclusion. But the deeds had been reserved for the last appeal, and Mr. Fastenon produced

them with the full confidence of one who thinks he has accomplished a triumphant stroke. He laid them on the table, and eagerly pressed upon the judge that the forged documents before him, together with the frank avowal of Priminheere, proved most satisfactorily, that distress of no ordinary character had compelled the unhappy Mortimer to pay away the notes, in discharge of a claim which was founded in fraud and crime.

Mr. Fastenon at length finished his well-timed and able arguments.

The judge paused, but did not examine the deeds. After considering for a short time he addressed the minister:—"Mr. Fastenon, you have done a very humane act, one which no doubt your conscience approves, and which all feeling men must applaud you for. You have done your duty, but I must, on my part, do mine. That is only reasonable and right. This is, indeed, a melancholy story, and I can assure you, no one pities more than myself, the situation in which this poor young gentleman is involved. But,—" and here the judge assumed a very serious tone,—"it is not the less an offence to do wrong because another person may happen to have committed a crime before you:—this is a doctrine, Sir, which, I am sure, you must occasionally promulgate from your pulpit. The wretched person, who, as you say, forged those writings, or at least one of them, beyond doubt perpetrated a most awful piece of wickedness, one for which, if detected, he would have most certainly answered with his life. But Mr. Mortimer's act was quite independent; he was under no compulsion, he freely and of his own will passed these notes in discharge of that which he supposed to be a just debt. The mischief which he did to the public was accomplished by this conduct. We cannot take into our consideration the motives which influence the commission of each offence against the laws. It is our duty, in selecting criminals for punishment, to look to the results of their particular actions, and to visit them with a greater or less penalty according to this test. The Bank, Mr. Fastenon, the counsel of the crown, the jury, and lastly, myself, have exercised a most careful discretion in this matter, and the conclusion has been an award of a most severe visitation upon this unhappy young gentleman, but one, at the same time, which I feel I cannot, I ought not to avert."

The voice of the judge faltered considerably as he closed the last period, and he was evidently much affected. The minister could not restrain his tears. The judge shook him by the hand, again complimented him upon the benevolent part he had taken, and said, he should never forget the personal respect with which he had been treated, and the modest course which the minister had adopted upon the occasion.

Mr. Fastenon had scarcely withdrawn from the scene of audience when a deputation of Quakers desired admission. They also waited upon the judge, with the view of saving the life of Mortimer, but their petition was couched in general terms, it condemned all capital punishments for forgery, and concluded in the most respectful terms with an earnest request that the prisoner then lying under sentence of death in Bedford gaol, might be reprieved.

The answer of the judge to their supplication was short, but full of kindness. He referred the petitioners to the crown; he said that he had no longer the power of dispensing mercy consistently with his sense of duty; but that his Majesty, if he should see fit, would be fully competent to grant their wishes even at the latest moment. On the succeeding day his lordship dismissed in a similar way, a petition signed by several clergymen and magistrates of the county in which Mortimer lived.

Ashamed of their own inaction, and jealous of the activity and energy which the dissenting preacher had displayed, they had at length caused a formal writing to be drawn up, to which they affixed their signatures, and they prevailed upon one amongst them, rather more industrious than the rest, to present it with due solemnity. The fate which it experienced has just been mentioned. The petitioners now deemed that they had interfered as far as possible for their countryman, and left him to his doom.

The judge soon afterwards departed from the Assize Town, and as he was troubled with no further applications upon the subject, the door of hope, as far as he was concerned, was closed eternally upon Mortimer.

But there were yet friends in London who knew that an appeal to the Home Secretary might avail when all other aids had failed. The Quakers, those unwearied friends of humanity, having learnt the criminal's sad

history, espoused his cause with unusual warmth, and resolved to stand firmly by him to the last hour. They prepared an appeal entirely different from that which they had presented to the judge, containing a full statement of the peculiar circumstances under which the offence had been committed, and being amply supplied with the required information from Mr. Fastenon, they forwarded their petition to the crown, with the least possible delay.

Besides these benevolent strangers, Charles Priminheere was in the field, anxious to redeem his pledge. The experience of his profession had taught him that it would be idle if he were to repair to the judge, but he, too, knew the value of a strong application to the government. He accordingly strained every nerve, and represented in every quarter the hardships of the prisoner's case, and the propriety of interposing the high prerogative of mercy. He considered, that the fact of his being the brother of James Priminheere would have its due weight, and by unceasing exertions he so far interested himself, as to become a most useful advocate for Mortimer.

The petitions were entertained by the Secretary for the Home Department with the same courtesy which distinguished the judge, and he heard with equal complacency the personal appeals of some people of high rank who had been induced to intercede for Mortimer.

Such was the nature of their application, and so plausible were the grounds for a remission of the sentence, that the great man promised to write to the judge in order that he might learn whether the merciful course to which he felt disposed to incline, might be adopted without injury to the public. This was little else than a confirmation of Mortimer's punishment, but the resolution of the secretary could not be gainsayed, and those who felt an interest in the fate of the prisoner were compelled to await the report of the judge. Their gloomy apprehensions were too accurately fulfilled: the contents of the judge's letter were not allowed to transpire, but it was soon ascertained that no hope remained for Mortimer unless the Throne itself were petitioned. Yet so sanguine and earnest were his friends, that it was determined rather to attempt this fruitless effort, than to abandon the last chance, so that having again

prepared an appeal, even more powerful than the former, the advocates for mercy succeeded in laying it before the Sovereign.

But a dull and ominous silence followed. From the gracious bosom of the King, indeed, no refusal of mercy could be looked for, but hour succeeded hour, and days passed away, yet there was neither reprieve nor respite.

Mortimer had now taken a last farewell of his mother and sister, and of his friends, and as the hours came surely on, became more and more resigned to the great calamity which was impending.

But although he was thus patient, Charles Priminheere showed the most acute symptoms of an agitated spirit. He had never rested since his return to London from the inhospitable home to which he had bidden a lasting adieu. His thoughts were now unalterably fixed on Mortimer; he pondered on the means of rescuing the brother of his beloved Mary, and embarked, regardless of labour and expense, heart and soul in the cause. Naturally warm and impatient, he was with difficulty restrained from being a dangerous advocate of the case he had espoused; for while employed in arranging the tragic history so as to create the most active compassion, his bosom glowed with the strongest indignation against the authors of so severe a punishment. But his enterprising zeal and activity had like to have been successful with the home secretary, for he had put the melancholy case of the convict in a point of view so striking, and had maintained it with so much ability, as nearly to overcome the known repugnance of that great officer to interfere with the decision of the judges. The idea of writing to the judge who presided at the trial was a thought of the latest moment. It served as a pretext for delay, and was the ruin of the talented application which Charles Priminheere had so warmly pressed.

Discomforted and despairing, he hastened to his chambers. They seemed gloomy and desolate. He could not rest there. It was late in the morning, and on the following day at twelve Mortimer was to suffer. He again sallied forth and sought out the sergeant who had defended the prisoner at Bedford. Admission was of course granted him, but the sergeant was busy considering a defence in which he was engaged concerning

a right of free warren. He was truly sorry, but he had nearly forgotten the circumstances. He declared, however, that, if it would be any consolation to Mr. Priminheere, in his judgment, he never had a client who was so clearly guilty. "But the savageness, the harshness of the punishment under such circumstances!" cried Charles. The sergeant stared, and shook his head. Vexed at the supineness and coldness of heart which he considered he had witnessed, the young barrister took his hat, and rather abruptly retreated from the unwelcome conference. The sergeant rang his bell with alacrity, and proceeded with his elaborate studies, glad enough to be rid of so incomprehensible an advocate, for he made it a rule never to be wiser than the jury and the court.

Charles Priminheere regained his sad abode, declaiming violently against the profligacy of his brethren, and the unwholesome state of the criminal laws. His condition was pitiable, for his mind had no resting-place. Once he resolved on posting instantly to Bedford, but reason clamoured incessantly against a step from which no good could possibly ensue. Life still remained, and Charles was bent on struggling to the last for one in whose fate he felt a far stronger interest than in his own brother's. But the constant hand of the dial was still moving on, and when he thought of the horrors of the morrow, the blood rushed into his face. He drove out the invading thought, but it returned in its most hideous forms; he strove again to deliberate, but in vain, till at last he was once more compelled to desert his forlorn rooms, and seek a temporary refreshment at a neighbouring tavern.

He called for a bottle of sherry, and, scarcely conscious of the extreme excitement under which he was suffering, drank glass after glass of the exhilarating liquor, till his supply was entirely gone. Far from being inebriated by this indulgence, his mind became immediately more calm, and his intellect more acute. He returned to his chambers, and sat down, still harping upon means to save the victim who was so soon to be immolated at the shrine of justice. At length, as if inspired, he seized a copy of the indictment which lay before him, but as quickly tossed it from him. "How," said he, groaning aloud in the extremity of his anguish,

"can I discover a flaw which the learning of the great sergeant has failed to catch at?" He took up the paper a second time. He thought he was dreaming. The words in his copy were forged and caused to be forged "a certain instrument OR paper writing called a bank note." Priminheere had always been a staunch friend to the liberty of the subject. He well knew that the meanest person in the realm was entitled to the clearest and most unequivocal statement of the case brought against him. He was well aware, too, as a lawyer, that no alternative could be used with success in an indictment. He read the paper again and again, and could hardly believe his eyes. The word *or* was plain and undeniable. It was a capital error, although the objection would now be somewhat of the latest, and in strictness could not, perhaps, be enforced in time to save Mortimer. Charles Priminheere's soul was roused up in an instant, and he rushed to the sergeant's, to compare his copy of the indictment with the sergeant's brief. The great lawyer was deeply engaged, though the time was now half-past eleven. But no resistance could be offered to an application so urgent as Priminheere's. The brief was produced, and the words were found to correspond. The sergeant was amazed, and complimented the young barrister. He began to consider whether the matter was not really worth arguing, and was beginning to put cases on the one side and the other, when Charles, who felt the inestimable value of the passing moments, made as flattering an excuse as he could, and hurried rapidly to the office of the Secretary of State. The secretary, however, had gone to his residence, which was at a considerable distance, and thither Priminheere hurried accordingly. But that officer had retired to rest, and when, at length, repeated knockings had called up a drowsy servant, he peremptorily refused to awaken his master. It was in vain to tell him that the life of a man depended upon his speedy compliance; he declared, with characteristic indifference, that it was as much as his place was worth to disturb the secretary, and he even shut the door in Priminheere's face. But the barrister was not thus easily to be daunted, he repeated his thunders at the knocker with such violence, as to occasion its being very speedily opened; and so great had been the noise and uproar of his efforts to gain admit-

tance, that no less a person now appeared on the staircase than the great man himself. He perceived in an instant that his visiter had neither been guilty of mistake nor intrusion, for Priminheere's manner was too earnest to create the least suspicion of his sincerity. In a minute afterwards the secretary recognised the able advocate who had so nearly persuaded him to grant a reprieve, and expressed his willingness to hear most patiently the whole of Priminheere's communication, however lengthy it may be, added the minister with a smile.

"Indeed, my Lord," returned the lawyer, "my speech on this occasion to your lordship will be very short, for that poor young man, Mortimer, is to be hung to-morrow morning at twelve o'clock, and I have the best reasons for believing that his sentence has been illegal."

"Indeed!" said the peer, with much emotion, "where is the place of execution, in what county?"

"In Bedfordshire, my Lord."

"Be calm, Mr. Priminheere," said the nobleman, "we can reach that county with ease, if it be necessary; proceed with your business."

Charles Priminheere then detailed, with distinctness, the grounds upon which he still persisted in seeking a revision of the sentence.

"A mere technical error," exclaimed his Lordship, with a tone of evident disappointment.

"My Lord," replied Charles, "we can have a writ of error upon this indictment; the sentence is altogether illegal. We only need the fiat of the Attorney-General."

"Is that so?" returned the secretary; "this seems to be merely a mistake of the officer, a mere error of course."

"My Lord," replied Priminheere earnestly, "I can assure your lordship that the fact is as I have stated it."

The peer continued to look incredulous.

"Time is going, my Lord, and my friend will be lost," exclaimed the barrister.

"Mr. Priminheere, be easy," returned the minister, "the time is yet with us, let us consider this matter; will you pledge yourself as a lawyer that the indictment is so bad as that execution ought not to be done upon it?"

"I will, my Lord," returned Charles.

"The most that I can do will be to grant a respite," said the peer, looking steadfastly at his visiter. "If you should be wrong, Sir, neither of us will cut a very good figure, because execution must then be done at last, and the delay will be an act of extreme cruelty to the poor prisoner."

"I see that clearly, my Lord," observed Priminheere, hastily, "but I am satisfied of the correctness of my objection."

"It is a case of life and death, Mr. Priminheere."

"Yes, my Lord, and your Lordship is intrusted with the power upon this occasion to destroy life or to save it."

"I don't know, Sir," exclaimed the secretary, after a pause, "I don't know, indeed, whether I shall be doing right or not; but there is a compunction about us all when life is at stake which hardly exists upon any other emergency."

The minister reached his inkstand, and drew forth a sheet of paper. "The most that I can do will be to grant a respite for forty-eight hours," said he.

"For a week, if your lordship will be kind enough," replied Priminheere, "in order that the judges may have time to look into the case."

"Well, for a week then." The minister took his pen, and wrote—

"See," said the peer, "will that do?" The heart of Priminheere sunk within him when he beheld—a respite so unexpected and so seasonable signed in due form. The secretary took wax and fixed the seal of office.

"Now, Mr. Priminheere," said the peer, "to whom shall we trust this? shall I send a messenger of my own?"

"I will undertake the charge of it, my Lord," exclaimed Priminheere, with unspeakable eagerness.

"You shall go, Sir, and my messenger shall accompany you with the respite—will that do?"

Charles Priminheere bowed, and expressed his gratitude.

"Good night, Sir," said the minister, shaking Priminheere by the hand. "A carriage shall be at the door in less than half-an-hour to convey you and the messenger to Bedford."

Accordingly, in less than the appointed time a post-

chaise and four appeared at the door of the Home Secretary, and having received the two passengers, started immediately for the gaol at a rapid rate.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

"The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death." *Measure for Measure.*

We have now arrived at the end of our history. The reader must have already anticipated Charles Priminheere, in his route to Bedford, and imagined within himself the joys of a prisoner rescued from the very jaws of death. And those are, indeed, joys; in spite of the consolations of religion, the resignation of philosophy, or the fervour of enthusiasm. If man had ever struggled against fear, and committed himself with calmness to the fatal doom which seemed in prospect, Mortimer had done so, and now, on the eve of the intended execution, seemed to live no longer for this world.

Yet when the mandate for arresting the stroke of death reached the prison, it was judged right that the redeeming news should be communicated to the reprieved culprit with the utmost caution.

The travellers had accomplished their journey some hours before the time appointed for the execution. Charles Priminheere descended rapidly from the carriage, and speedily gained the gaol accompanied by the messenger who held the happy packet. The keeper of the prison instantly recognised the courier of the Home Secretary, and anticipated his mission. Such was the regard which each inmate of the gaol felt for Mortimer, and so strongly had his fate been commiserated, that the governor could not refrain from tears. The clergyman had just arrived full of sorrow. His eye was dim from want of sleep, and his countenance faithfully betrayed the sense of a duty which he was awaiting with anxiety and dread. He smote upon his breast when the respite was shown him, and clasped his hands with an earnestness which the reprieved culprit could not have sur-

passed. The joyous information at this late hour overwhelmed every one with astonishment and rejoicing, for Mortimer had been the only criminal doomed to suffer.

He had been removed on the previous evening to the condemned cell, the common abode of such as were destined to death, whether of gentle or plebeian blood. We have said that it had been resolved to acquaint him with the news of his respite with great caution. This decision was soon made after a consultation between the chaplain and Charles Priminheere, although the latter was with difficulty restrained from seeking an immediate interview with Mortimer. Priminheere, however, could not be dissuaded from visiting the cell where the clergyman proposed to break the important subject to his unconscious disciple.

They approached the fatal room in silence, trembling with anxiety, though they bore the tidings of life. The messenger was invited to accompany them. The doors of the cell were unbarred, and the party entered. But stillness reigned throughout the gloomy apartment. The chaplain approached the bed where the prisoner was lying. He was in a profound slumber; the muscles of his face were undisturbed; and his breast scarcely heaved.

"Your counsels must, indeed, have been excellent," said Priminheere, almost involuntarily, to the chaplain.

"Death, indeed, seems to have lost its terrors here!" exclaimed the messenger, bending over the sleeping convict.

"Give God the praise, then!" cried the minister. "No merit is due to mortal man."

The noise of the conversation at length awoke Mortimer. He looked around him with a steady eye, and then said, with a resolution which could not be questioned: "Gentlemen, I am ready!"

The fearless accent with which he pronounced these words, and the firm demeanour which he exhibited, had nearly disconcerted the whole party. Charles Priminheere stepped hastily forward, as though he had resolved to communicate the good news on the instant, but the chaplain as quickly interposed. Sitting down calmly by the bed-side of Mortimer, the clergyman disclosed by degrees, and with infinite prudence, the change of circumstances which had occurred. He forbore to raise hopes by holding out the expectation of final deliverance,

and besought Mortimer to consider the present respite as one merely temporary, and which, at its expiration, might very possibly fail of a renewal. But sufficient had been said to inspire the prisoner with the idea that his life was for the present, at least, safe from the hands of the executioner.

When the messenger produced the document which ordained that Mortimer was again for a time to be numbered amongst the living, the sources of existence rallied within him, and the false fabric, which he had conceived strong enough to resist all human impulses, gave way in an instant. He looked earnestly upon his deliverers for a few moments, and sunk back insensible upon his pillow.

The difficulty which Charles Priminheere had so successfully raised, was soon taken into consideration, and, after a short interval, it was intimated that the prisoner was to have the benefit of his Majesty's most gracious pardon. The peculiar hardship of his case procured this favourable issue, for it was well known that he might again have been subjected to the dangerous ordeal of a jury, the error in his indictment being merely technical. Charles Priminheere, however, remained steady to the interests of Mary Mortimer's brother; and having established the illegality of his accusation to the satisfaction of the great law-officers, he had the less difficulty in gaining the general and full amnesty above alluded to.

The consequence of Mortimer's pardon was his restoration to Byrdwood; but although he had been emancipated from his crime by the kindness of his Sovereign, the slightest reflection served to convince him that his reputation in the neighbourhood where his property was situated was gone past recall. It was soon arranged, therefore, that he should leave home for the Continent, and he was heard to express hopes that years of foreign travel might in some measure redeem him from the ignominy under which he was labouring in his own country. But before this separation took place, he gladly gave his concurrence to an union between his sister and Charles Priminheere. On his part, feelings of gratitude demanded his consent; on theirs, a long cherished regard sanctioned the accomplishment of their mutual wishes. Byrdwood, too, was to be their place of resi-

dence, and Roger Mortimer could not help indulging a feeling of consolation in the idea that his mother and sister were now no longer at the mercy of a supplanting stranger. The difference of creed between the bride and her husband interposed no barrier to their mutual happiness, for the spirit of toleration had enlightened them, and each felt that religious liberty could thrive free from the reproaches of heresy.

Albert Moonshine still continues to occupy the chair of state into which he was installed by Mrs. Hodges, the landlady. He is occasionally rallied, and probably will continue to be lashed by his companions, for the indolence and indifference which he manifested when Mortimer's life was in extreme danger. But he constantly replies to these severe satires by insisting upon the weakness of his health, and by vehemently declaring that he was not less active than the rest of his neighbours in a cause which was universally considered to be desperate. From such declarations we may venture to conclude that he will not be tempted to engage again in any matters of public interest. He will hardly be prevailed upon to try the effect of another speech, or the hazard of another duel; nor is it probable that he will any longer aspire to exchange his mother's gentle dominion for that of a matrimonial alliance.

By a variety of careful and crafty policies Mrs. Hamilton has managed to hush up the inconvenient stories which were spread abroad on the subject of her son-in-law's death-bed. Mrs. Priminheere soon recovered from the stroke which the awful end of her husband necessarily inflicted upon her, and in all probability she will shortly be found amongst the chief votaries of fashion. Whether Dr. Dundrosy will live to officiate at her second marriage, cannot now be ascertained; but it is certain, that he has not been known to rise before nine at the earliest, since the morning when he was summoned to unite James Priminheere with the daughter of Mrs. Hamilton.

Regarding the rest of the characters who have made a figure in this history, we can only say, that with the exception of Carl Jones, all, as far as we know, are continuing steadily in their several callings. The poor blacksmith, however, is no more. He was returning home late a short time since in a state of sad insobriety;

not from his favourite village alehouse, but from a strange tavern to which he had been unhappily seduced, when it is supposed that the hand of death suddenly overtook him. He was found by the side of the road deserted by all, and lifeless; and the jury who assembled to inquire concerning his fate, were so satisfied of his unsound condition, that they unhesitatingly attributed his death to suffocation from excessive drinking, and returned their verdict in conformity with that opinion. It was a sorrowful day for Carl's old companions, who declared unanimously, that they would never have left him to perish, and that he would not have come to such an end, had he remained steadfast to his village friends.

In conclusion, although our peculiar duty extends no further than to record the facts which have been detailed, yet we cannot forbear the observation, that since the first chapter of our tale was written, the capital punishment for forgery has become more obnoxious in this country.* As novelists, or historians, or compilers of tales, which ever name may be assigned us, we do not pretend even to hint at the reasons of this change; but we cannot refrain from adverting to the fact, as a proof of the advancing civilization of society. With this intimation, which is not by any means foreign from the main features of our story, we respectfully bid the reader for the present farewell.

* Whilst the press, the great organ of benefit, has been working these pages, a Bill has been passed—abolishing the punishment of Death for Forgery in all cases—except for making *false Wills*, and *Powers of Attorney*.—The Lord Chancellor did not approve the exceptions, but his suggestions were of no avail. He is at least half a century in advance.

THE LUNATIC.

CHAPTER I.

THE STOCK EXCHANGE.

"Now they go up, up, uppy,
Now they go down, down, downy,
And now they go round-about, round-about, roundy."
Old Ballad.

"THREE three-eighths," said a voice of authority, on a certain day in the year of our Lord 1825, in a place which was crowded with anxious countenances and eager listeners.

"That'sh a backwardation," said a Hebrew, "of three-eighthsh per shent. to-day. They musht go down. Fifty thoushandt for de account to sell," cried the Jew, with a loud voice.

"And I sell twenty thoushandt," exclaimed another of the tribe, as if waiting the beck of his more wealthy or daring brother.

"It's done"—and "it's done," were the speedy responses to these exciting offers. "And I'd buy one hundred thousand more," said a dapper, elderly-looking man, with his hands snugly fixed in his breeches' pockets, smiling at the same time with an air of superiority which inspired the most winning confidence in his immediate neighbourhood. Never did a portly personage with a blue coat, white waistcoat, and exquisite top-boots, appear to better advantage. "There's a balance of a thousand or so between us, Mr. Israel, I believe," continued he, as he struck the bargain of fifty thousand with the Jew. You can give me a draft for it at your leisure."

"Not to-day," said Mr. Israel, with a shrug of dismay.

"No, no," replied the other, "I know this is your Sunday—I didn't mean to offend you."

"Oh! no, no; no offence," said the Jew; "ve never pay money on the Shabbath—but there's no offence."

"Three," said the authoritative voice.

"The Hebrews are selling. Those fellows are always right," said one of the bystanders. The purchaser of the fifty thousand was evidently disconcerted, but he stalked away with an indifferent air, declaring that the funds must rise as soon as the Jews had exhausted their Sabbath speculations.

"Two three-quarters!"

"What's the meaning of two three-quarters?" said a stripling of some eighteen years, who had wandered into this scene of active business.

"Ninety-two three-quarters," said a good-natured broker, with an obvious feeling of compassion for the ignorance of his inquirer.

"What is ninety-two three-quarters?" again asked the young man.

"Consols, to be sure," returned the broker, passing quickly forward to another place.

"What do you think of it?—what do you think of things now?" said a stout gentleman, evidently from the country, to a care-worn personage, whose opinion he seemed anxious to gain. The person whom he addressed was a slim, short, withered form, with a forehead as deeply furrowed as though he had been wont for years to poise the balance of empires. His eyes started strongly from their sockets; his lips seemed the eternal utterers of calculation; his long, wasted fingers moved to and fro with a precision which close thought alone could have dictated; whilst the jaundiced, sunken cheek betokened the ravages of incessant toils and straining accuracy.

"What do *you* think?" was the reply of this ghost-like counsellor, who scarcely deigned to cast a look upon his visiter when he spoke.

"I think they'll be lower," said the other.

"Do you?" was the answer of the broker, who accompanied the exclamation with a convulsive shudder, and a shrewdly-penetrating glance. "What makes you think so?" continued he.

"I think I shall sell ten thousand," said the countryman.

"Will you?" returned the other, with an air of affected compassion. "Have you made up your mind?" said he again, after a short pause.

"If you please, Sir," said a gay tripping young woman, "will you buy a hundred pounds for me into the funds?"

"Into what funds, my dear?" replied the broker.

"Into the Three per Cents., Sir, if you please, if it's worth your while to take so much trouble."

"That I will, and very much obliged to you, my dear, although it is but half-a-crown."

And so saying, he sprang out with an alacrity peculiar to his craft, and jerking his hand to his hat, with a sudden bow was almost instantly out of sight.

A crowd had now collected at a corner of the Exchange whose eager looks bore evident witness that something of no common occurrence had happened, or was then at hand. These were the frequenters of the great gambling-house, where the changes of men and times are talked over with as much carelessness as the chances of a horse-race. These were the bulls and bears of that day, (according to the phraseology of the place,) whose characters were for ever shifting with the tides of fortune. He who was a bull a week since, when the Funds were at their height, might be an earnest bear a few days after, upon a decline of those securities. A victory or a peace would be wont to make a hundred bulls, or speculators for a rise; a defeat, a few riots, or an unfavourable report, would turn the whole hundred bears beyond redemption.

But now there seemed to be something quite rare; it could not be a battle, or a conquest, for profound peace reigned throughout the land; it could hardly be a mere disturbance, for an event of that sort would never stir up such a commotion as the present; it was an affair, to judge by the riveted gaze of the multitude, of most unpromising appearance. At this moment, when heads and shoulders were mixed up together in a most motley assembly, a youth, a stranger, who had long watched the party with curiosity, ventured amongst them. But his presence was instantly detected, and no sooner perceived than resented. A general clamour arose; one seized the unhappy intruder by the shoulders, another pulled him by the coat, a third knocked off his hat, and

it cannot be ascertained to what extent the violence would have been carried on, had not the young man dexterously extricated himself from his tormentors. Gladly enough did he scamper down the court, into whose precincts he had so incautiously entered, and it is even said, that he felt his pockets as he issued forth from the inhospitable land, fearing that, instead of being punished for his curiosity, he had perchance fallen among thieves.

The mysterious conversation still went on, but its purport remained concealed from the public, who continued to stray about the Exchange, buying and *selling* as the fancy of each prompted. At length rumours of strange occurrences reached the barrier of that unapproachable spot; and truths, which would have been kept secret had it been possible, were no longer suppressed. It is customary when a failure takes place at the great mart of money, for an individual appointed to the office, to strike several times against the wall with his hand. This signal announces that bankruptcy has happened, the speculating mob rush together with eagerness to gain the name of the defaulter, and each begins to anticipate the accuracy of his own private surmises. Presently the name is mentioned, and the accounts are of course referred to the all-powerful committee; whilst, if the unfortunate insolvent be a man of note, a hundred tongues are let loose at once, and become profusely slanderous, as jealousy or interest may chance to dictate. "Bang—bang—bang," resounded at this time against the wall more than once, or twice, or thrice; the assembly were aghast, no one knew precisely the cause of such united disasters, though whispers of a general bankruptcy were by no means silent. "Bang—bang—bang."—Consols eighty-eight—seven—six—five—four—three—two—one. "Bang—bang—bang." Failures for ten, twenty, fifty—one hundred thousand. The public soon participated in the terror; confusion, panic, suspicion, despair succeeded, and in a very short interval as great an alarm prevailed as when the Pretender, of fading memory, was marching to London with his handful of Scots. In a quarter of an hour after the breaking out of the rumour, one thousand pounds were worth a diamond of double their cost; and in a short half hour after that, no ordinary man would advance five hundred pounds to his neighbour upon any pretence.

The foundations of credit were shaken: commerce drooped her head; bills floated in oceans upon the glutted market; bankers stopped their payments; distress sat brooding upon every brow. The most topping merchant on the 'change was scarcely safe; the frugal scrivener drew forth his hidden hoards; the firmest banker abjured the constant tread of the customer; and each tradesman of repute trembled for the state of his acceptances.

"Ninety thousand! I'll pay ninety thousand pounds into your hands to-morrow morning," cried an important personage, striding into a house of the first eminence, where a run was going on to a ruinous extent. The vociferous customers were astonished, and in a short time the clamour for money ceased in that quarter. It was said that the firm were as good as the Bank.

The reports of a general insolvency proved but too true, and in the midst of this calamity, consols were closed for the dividend. They fell to a price unprecedented since the war, and the greatest interest was required to obtain a sum of money from them out of the usual time. A gentleman was observed pacing the floor of Tom's coffee-house in a state of much agitation about this time. His hurried manner tempted an immediate inquiry. "My Reduced, Sir, my Reduced," was his answer. "What should I have done if it had not been for my Reduced?"

"There are the Consols, Sir," replied the inquirer with calm dignity.

"Shut, Sir, shut," exclaimed the gentleman with increased emotion. It was the excitement of gratitude and triumph.

On a certain day, not far distant from the first appearance of these pecuniary revolutions, a sharp-visaged middle-aged man walked with as much sang-froid as he could muster, into the counting-house of Mammon and Company. The principal partner of that firm received Dr. Welkin with great courtesy, and entreated him to be seated, with an air which might have induced a spectator to suppose that the visiter was master of thousands. A pause succeeded for some moments. It was evident that Dr. Welkin had entrusted his agent with a commission, and that the physician was awaiting the issue of the affair with intense interest.

"I have just arrived from the country," said Dr. Welkin, "and I am impatient to know the state of my account." The broker was silent. "Come, Mammon," continued the doctor, "I want a good round thousand just now. I've come just in time." At this moment a considerable clamour was heard in the adjoining court, which was hard by the great gaming-house. Mr. Mammon rushed hastily forth to learn the cause of this movement, and the doctor followed closely at his heels.

"This is the house," said Mammon.

"What house?" said Welkin.

"Why, the Stock Exchange, to be sure," replied the other.

"What a bear-garden!" thought the doctor as he entered amidst an incessant din of numerous striving tongues. The outcry in the court was only an altercation between two Israelites; but Mr. Mammon, for reasons which will presently be evident enough, availed himself of the opportunity to leave his visiter, and he was not a little chagrined at finding that he was pursued so closely. However, so great was the excitement of the times, so clamorous were the borrowers of stock and money, so sudden was the ruin of those who had carried their heads on high, and so ambitious the exertions of a hundred noisy tongues to proclaim the various mischiefs which occurred, that Mammon considered himself safe for a time from the pains of a disagreeable examination. He was in his element too, for the rude jargons and scarcely human sounds which resounded through the alley, while they confounded a stranger, were familiar to the understanding of the busy broker. —"Consols, consols, consols."—"Another immense failure!"—"Consols, seventy-five three-eighths."—"New four per cents. to sell."—"The prosperity fours, you mean." (Loud laughter.)—"Young Napoleon Bonaparte let loose from Vienna, and a republic looking up in France."—"Very likely."—"Consols, a quarter per cent. lower."—"The great firm of Mammon and Company bought fifteen hundred thousand last week." —"All bulls."—"Messrs. Israel, Moses, and Company, sold de same."—"All bears."—"Fifty country banks gone! Mr. Rotischield?"—"It is very well, ve shall recover from thish panic by and by."—"Long Annuities to sell."—"Only thirty years to run!"—"Pay

six per cent., and no risk."—"The Bank books are open for all men of credit."—"Hurrah! hurrah? we're all men of credit."—"Consols are rising—up—up—up—hurrah!"

Such were a few of the sounds which broke forth on all sides, accompanied by occasional personal remarks, which added much to the grotesque character of the scene. But whilst Doctor Welkin was standing both annoyed and astonished at the interruption which he had met with, one of the tribe of Israel accosted Mr. Mammon in confidence, and began to rally him upon his late speculations on the losing side.

"That doctor of yours may go break de stones on de road," added the unconscious Jew most triumphantly.

"How? What? How is this?" exclaimed Welkin, fearfully alarmed, as though Mammon had no other doctor for a client except himself. An explanation now became indispensable; and Mammon, inwardly denouncing the Hebrew for his officiousness, was obliged to retreat from the din of his acquaintance, and enter upon particulars with his persecuting physician, from which he would gladly have been spared.

"And so there was a most dreadful blow, Mr.—I beg pardon, Dr. Welkin—" said Mammon, with a face full of compassion and intelligence; after detailing at some length the rise, progress, and outbreaking of the panic.

"A most terrible shock, Sir; I am rejoiced that you were not here, it would have been too much for you. It was too much for us all. We are half of us ruined, I can assure you. I never recollect any thing at all like it."

"All this preparation satisfies me that I am not to gain much at your hands," said the physician, quaking within himself, and trembling for the remainder of the history. "I shall not lose much—" added he, with an air of mistrust. "My Stock is safe;" continued he, his alarm not abating as the broker maintained an ominous silence. "The Stock, I mean, which I pledged with you," pursued the doctor.

"I hardly know what to say, Dr. Welkin; you have but a very slight idea of the awful confusion and distress which we have had."

"That was the only Stock which I possessed in the world," cried the professor of physic, who now began

to anticipate the worst. The broker looked rather confused at hearing this information.

"Every shilling on earth is contained in those Consols," repeated Welkin with confounding energy.

"I am very sorry, very sorry indeed;" returned Mammon with a complacency and a command of his feelings which were admirable under the circumstances—"but you know that there is an agreement."

"But what of that?" said the doctor, "you surely don't mean to tell me that all my Stock is gone."

"If the truth must be told, Doctor Welkin, and really the events will almost justify it, it is so."

"Then there has been some most abominable stock-jobbing trick played me," cried the ruined physician.

"Now, my dear Sir, be patient, and consider the times, the dreadful shocks—the banks which have—"

"A truce to all your complainings, when you have been the ruin of me," said Welkin. "But I shall demand my Stock of you Mr. Mammon, I shall bring an action against you. It was only lent to you."

"I beg your pardon again, Doctor Welkin, the agreement which is contained in your letter to me will save me from any further responsibility as your agent."

"No such agreement!" exclaimed the doctor violently.

"I have a letter under your hand," replied the broker calmly, "which empowered me to speculate with the Stock intrusted to me in any manner I should see fit for the advantage of my employer. Circumstances such as never before happened—"

"A truce to the circumstances, you have told me that ten times already," said Dr. Welkin.

"Well then, there was a backwardation—"

"A what?"

"A backwardation, or backadation, as it is sometimes pronounced, is a decline in the Funds, according to our mode of speaking here."

"A pretty set of fellows you are indeed," exclaimed the doctor; "but you shall not persuade me that I am to lose the whole of my property for the sake of a letter which gives you authority to make one or two little bargains for me."

"I am afraid that you will find this authority more extensive than that," observed Mr. Mammon.

"But is it all gone—all?" inquired the physician.

"That, certainly, and I much regret to say it, is so indeed, Doctor Welkin. In fact there is a balance in my favour of about twenty pounds, but you can pay that trifle quite at your own convenience."

"Oh, as to that,"—returned Welkin—

"Indeed, I beg that you will not distress yourself upon that subject," interrupted the broker.

"I was going to say, that as to that balance—"

"My dear Sir, it is of no importance," resumed Mammon, "after such great, such unforeseen losses, we must be merciful."

"Well, but hear me," said Welkin; "I say, in the first place, that I have not got twenty pounds in the world—" Mr. Mammon shrugged up his shoulders at this. "In the next place, I will not be the dupe of any such tricks as these, Mr. Mammon. Eight hundred Consols, out of which my carriage on beginning business, the furniture of my house, and all my little wants were to be supplied—all gone at once, and through a man who pretended to be my friend!"

"Well, but, doctor," said the other; "you know that you never made any objection to winning, and I have got you many a handsome windfall before now. I have given you a turn or two, doctor."

"Don't insult me, Sir, under my misfortunes," cried Welkin, with impatience; "no wonder that you were so unwilling to come to an explanation. However, the public shall know it, the press shall visit you for it, and the lawyers, yes, the lawyers, Sir, shall lay hold on you for this piece of treachery."

"Nay, if you are going to be personal, Doctor Welkin," said the broker, rather rapidly; "I have done, and I shall beg you to withdraw from the office. There is a moderation in every thing. Indeed, I believe I'm wanted."

"You shall be punished if I live four-and-twenty hours longer," continued the doctor, hastily.

Mammon here rang a small bell, and his clerk immediately appeared.

"Brisk—does no one want me?" said the broker.

"Yes, Sir, there are several below," replied the clerk, "but as I thought you were particularly engaged—" looking at the same time at the doctor, who had been a very good customer at the office, "I didn't like to

disturb you. But there's Colonel Whattle, and Sir Peter Dabble below."

"Sir Peter Dabble!" cried Mammon. "Mr. I beg pardon, Doctor Welkin, I am sure you will excuse me, I must attend to my customers."

"Sir, you shall not move," said the doctor, "before I have a promise from you to return me some part at all events of the stock you have robbed me of." And upon that Dr. Welkin placed himself against the door.

"Very well, very well, doctor," returned Mammon, opening another door on the further side of the room.

"There," continued he, speaking to his clerk. "Brisk, go and fetch me an officer—go." But whilst the young man retired to obey this order, Doctor Welkin clenched his fist, and advanced towards the broker in an attitude which promised nothing short of instant hostility.

"An assault, an assault," shouted Mammon—"Help! help!"

"You griping, faithless wretch!" continued Welkin, holding his fist in the face of the astonished money calculator; "do you think to escape me by sending for constables, and bullying a man who is going out of your doors nearly penniless? Do you? you base Jew!" The spirit of abuse seemed to add fury to the already awakened wrath of the doctor, for he proceeded to grasp his victim by the collar, and had it not been for the entrance of the clerk accompanied by an officer, more violence had undoubtedly been perpetrated. The timely assistance, however, of a stout constable, aided as he was by the servant and his master, soon removed the outrageous physician from the scene of action; and Doctor Welkin retired from the office vowing the most relentless revenge against the firm of Mammon and Company, together with a hundred solemn pledges that he would instantly set both attorney and counsel at work to gain redress for the wrongs he had suffered.

The din of the Exchange went on as usual, and the obnoxious Mammon continued to make and to dissolve bargains, as indifferently as though he had never hazarded his client's money, nor ruined an inconsiderate though greedy speculator like Doctor Welkin.

CHAPTER II.

THE PHYSICIAN AND THE APOTHECARY.

"Well, but now I do suppose you would readily acquaint me, that all the good experienced nurses are tutorizing or doctorizing ladies, or others still confirm it more strongly to you, ever recounting an infinity of great cures performed by the great [Physician.] Nay, that even your well, and so very notably-practised and experienced Apothecary, (who unquestionably and surely must be a good, or the best judge of these matters,) likewise confirms it, and assures you of the same. How can there then, say you, *be any mistake?* Yet I beg of you, dear sir, to allow me to ask you, will not my very next reader, by the same rule, assure me of the same thing, and the like assurances from his Apothecary or other the good woman or people about him, or his Physician also?"

One Physician is e'en as good as t'other, pp. 2, 3.

Doctor Welkin went home to his lodgings; they were the same which he had occupied before his temporary absence abroad, from whence he had only returned to witness the frustration of his projects, and the wreck of his fortunes. These rooms were on the second floor, in a street hard by the money mart, from whence the doctor could issue with ease and security, to ascertain the fluctuations of the market. He had been hoping for some years to amend the reduced condition of a small property which his parents had left behind, and which he had found no difficulty in lessening by a variety of speculations and extravagances. From the humble dwelling he inhabited, it was the intention of Dr. Welkin to emerge in the character of a regular physician, legitimately prepared to effect cures and dispense prescriptions without limit, with a carriage ready built for the enticement of a wealthy alliance, and a house well furnished and ornamented, either for the reception of patients, or a moneyed heiress. This hope however became more and more distant, as constant neglect and consequent failures contributed to impair the fund from which these expenses were to be defrayed, till at length, in common with most unsuccessful gamesters, the doctor determined to risk every thing, and to rise or fall by one desperate attempt. To attain this, he entrusted his broker with very full powers, and retired from the bustle of the scene in confidence that prosperity was

awaiting his venture. Chance, however, did not befriend him, as we have already had occasion to show, although it is more than probable, that had he remained at home to manage his own affairs, he might have succeeded in no ordinary degree; for it has been said, (although we cannot vouch for the fact,) that whilst Mammon and another broker were disputing about a turn, as it is called, (a technical term of no great honesty,) the stocks gave way in the alarming manner which has been related, and consequently, the intended sale of Welkin's property, by which he would have been a great gainer, did not take place. It afterwards became necessary to sell it for the purpose of paying differences, a ruinous debt which was as much owing to the obstinacy of the broker as to the perilous change of public credit which took place at that time.

In this unpromising state, Doctor Welkin, without either carriage or house, was compelled to seek the shelter of his lodging, most fully repining at the past, and sadly uncertain concerning the future. The sight of a common mahogany table, a few cane-seated chairs, a worn horse-hair sofa, a tea-chest of many generations, and a spinnet dated about 1750, the everlasting ornaments of the sitting-room, sharpened all his bitter recollections. He sipped his tea mournfully, with the only silver spoon which could be spared him, thought on a thousand matters, conjured up hopes which faded as he dwelt upon them, and at length surrendered at discretion to the deepest despair. And desperate indeed might have been the result of the doctor's meditations, had he not bethought himself of the mysteries of his art. A worshipper of opium almost from his boyhood, he never failed to invoke the aid of that drug upon a painful emergency. Upon this occasion he drew forth from an exquisite ivory box, one of the few luxuries which yet remained to him, the potent medicament which was to dispel the clouds of dismay, and rear up those golden visions he had so often courted with success. A larger draught than usual was prepared for this critical season, a measure so immense, that an unpractised speculator would soon have gone to the cave of the seven sleepers, such, and so great was the cup which the doctor drank off without trembling, at this painful hour. The spell soon took effect; the physician had not miscalculated

the strength of his resources, nor presumed too much upon his power of resisting the poison; he sat entranced awhile, like the enchanters of old, delighted by the most fascinating futurities, and wrapt in the most joyous conceptions; then suddenly fell into a sound and increasing slumber, which yielded not till long after the full noon of the succeeding day.

Nature at length rallied, and the doctor unconsciously returned to life and sense. He rose anxiously from his bed, forgetful for a time of the calamities which had overwhelmed him. The magical charm had not yet entirely dispersed; he hastened to the breakfast table, called for the newspaper, and mechanically threw his eye towards the prices of the public funds. Still the spell held on; his full recollection had not returned; he did as he had been wont in former days. Without daring to read the interesting page which contained the desired numbers, he first threw the paper on the table, started from his seat, placed his hand against his forehead, and paced the room with hurried strides. Again he adventured to read, and again apprehension frighted him from his purpose. He seized the journal at length, (such had always been his custom,) glanced rapidly over the money calculations, and was in an instant restored to the remembrance of his fallen condition. There were the prices indeed, but he had now no funds to maintain, nor money to hazard. The powers of the drug had evaporated, and the absolute wretchedness of his state was awfully present to the doctor's mind; there was, literally, no chance for him; the brilliant visions of his imagination had closed, and objects ghastly and terrible danced around him. Nature refused her aid, for her resources were spent; hope gleamed no longer, for there was no prospect to entice her; joy was banished, for the seeds of delight had been exterminated.

"This is the end of a stock exchange gamester," exclaimed Welkin, grasping a phial which lay near him full of deadly liquor. "For ten years," continued he, in a state of agitation, "for ten years have I watched the daily press, morning after morning, and these are the fruits—ruined by my own friend, and cut, as I shall be, by every one of my acquaintance. Come," added the doctor, uncorking the bottle, "death is far better

than poverty, and nobody thinks it wrong now-a-days, to get rid of an obnoxious and care-worn life."

And really, but that the doctor had philosophized rather too much, it would be exceedingly hazardous to affirm that he was not in earnest upon this occasion. He had taken the right bottle, he had drawn forth the cork, he had done all except to lift the phial to his lips, perhaps to mutter a prayer first. Whether cowardice, or selfishness, or philosophy, might have swayed Dr. Welkin at the fatal critical moment, it is now impossible to determine; he might have quailed beneath the killing vision which presented itself before him; he might have lent a greedy ear to a new tale of hope; he might have had vouchsafed to him a glimpse of reason; in fact, he might have done any thing save the swallowing of the poison. But matters were destined far otherwise. At this important crisis, a thundering knock was heard at the street door; such a summons had hardly been experienced at the doctor's place of residence for half a century; it was a knock of authority. Dr. Welkin started, and evidently abandoned for a few seconds all thoughts of suicide. Mrs. Twitch, the landlady, entered the room rather abruptly, and asked if she should go down to the door. The physician still held the awful phial in his hand, and whatever his thoughts were, looked like a man bent in good earnest upon a desperate deed.

"But God bless the good gentleman!" said Mrs. Twitch, clasping her hands together, "what is the matter with him?"

"What's the matter! what's the matter indeed!" returned the doctor with a voice much unlike that of a man reprieved from death; "do you go down, Mrs. Twitch, and open the door, do; don't you hear the knocking?"

Notwithstanding this appeal, Mrs. Twitch looked confused, and incapable of executing the doctor's command, and immediately another awakening motion of the knocker resounded through the house.

"Now, there now! Mrs. Twitch," vociferated Dr. Welkin; "now that's some patient come for me, and he can't get in through your obstinacy. Now, good woman, do go, and make haste!"

"But bless the gentleman!" echoed Mrs. Twitch,

fixing her eyes upon the distorted garments of the doctor, upon his wild staring looks, and the motley stains on his plaited shirt: "Is any thing the matter, Sir?"

"The matter—no, Mrs. Twitch. Now, for God's sake open the door!" cried Dr. Welkin, whose desire for death had yielded in an instant to that of gaining fresh worldly blessings. Mrs. Twitch, however, still stood irresolute. The ghastly figure before her, so unlike the elegant medical pupil she had for so many years been wont to see, entirely absorbed all other feelings.

"Now, the patient will go away!" exclaimed the doctor, rising, and looking out at the window with anxiety. "Now, do go," said he, gently tapping Mrs. Twitch on the shoulder.

"Shall I say you're at home, Sir?" said the landlady, at length preparing to execute the order.

"At home! at home! why, to be sure!" returned the physician, "always at home!" And at that instant a third knock, accompained by an impatient ring, again saluted the ears of the whole household.

"God bless the man for waiting!" cried Welkin with intense anxiety. "God bless the woman, go, or I'll go myself! Dr. Welkin is at home, to be sure!" His extreme eagerness decided the matter. The landlady went down for the purpose of obeying the order; and so earnest was the doctor, that he could not help coming to the staircase and crying out, "Mind! I am at home, Mrs. Twitch, to any body." Satisfaction could no longer be refused to the urgent importunities of the visiter without and of the doctor within: the door was opened, and Welkin was gratified by hearing his name mentioned, and directly afterwards by the gradual approach of the guest towards his apartments.

"Mr. Ambrose Squaggs," said the landlady, introducing with hesitation a stout, Dutch-built, grave-looking, middle-aged person, whose nose betokened the regard he entertained for generous living, and whose legs seemed to labour beneath the weight they were bound to sustain. Panting for breath, Mr. Squaggs, nevertheless, advanced to meet the physician.

"Mr.——," repeated Welkin, in a state of delightful ecstasy, again desirous to hear the name pronounced.

"Mr. Ambrose Squaggs, Sir," said Mrs. Twitch, as she withdrew, blessing herself at her lodger's wild and

uncouth appearance. For the unshaved and haggard professor of medicine presented an appearance which might have scared away the most confiding patient on his list.

"Mr. Squaggs," again ejaculated the doctor, rejoiced that he had mastered the strange name—"Pray be seated." Welkin handed a chair at the instant, and with so much politeness, that his spectral form, contrasted with the accomplished air he had suddenly put on, seemed to savour in no small degree of Quixotism. The fat little visiter, however, sat down entirely at his ease, and appeared as though he was endeavouring to fetch his breath again after the laborious ascent of the stairs.

"Asthmatic!" thought the physician, gazing intensely upon the subject before him, and redeeming at the same time in an instant every thing he had read upon that disease.

"My dear Sir, what is the matter?" at length said Doctor Welkin, unable to bridle his impatience.

"Why, Doctor Welkin, I am a little asthmatic, and the fatigue of reaching you has overpowered me; but I shall be better presently. I am not always subject to these attacks."

"Just as I thought," muttered Welkin very complacently. "How long is it since you have been troubled with this complaint, Sir?" he asked again with tenderness.

"Oh! nearly twenty years, I suppose," returned Mr. Squaggs, rather abruptly.

"I am surprised that you never thought of having advice before," continued the doctor, rather astonished at the obstinacy of the disease he imagined himself called upon to combat.

"Oh, why, as to advice," replied Squaggs, "I've had plenty of that; but you know that asthma is not cured in a day."

"True, Mr. Squaggs," rejoined the physician; "but sometimes a lucky practitioner is allowed by Providence to discover a remedy which has escaped the faculty for centuries."

"Yes, yes," said the other, "and the author of the new medicine, you know, is called a quack."

"Yes, he's called a quack, certainly," answered Welkin, evidently disconcerted at the smartness of the re-

ply; "but the asthma is a disagreeable complaint, nevertheless, and if it can be cured—why, surely there is no harm—"

"Oh! none; none at all!" exclaimed Squaggs with great calmness. "I feel myself better now."

"I'm glad to hear it, Sir," said the doctor.

"I shall be able to mention my business to you directly," observed the guest, without more emotion than the paroxysm of his disease had obviously occasioned.

"Your business!" repeated Doctor Welkin, with some surprise; "you didn't come to consult me about the asthma, then, did you, Sir? I hope nothing worse."

"Consult you about the asthma! ha! ha! ha! I really beg your pardon, though, doctor," cried Mr. Squaggs. "No; I certainly did not come for that purpose. Why, you hav'nt got your diploma yet, have you?"

"My diploma, Sir?"

"Why, don't you recollect Ambrose Squaggs?"

"'Pon my word," replied the physician, "I do not —indeed I do not." And at this moment, taking into consideration the negligent state of his figure, Doctor Welkin looked doubly forbidding. But the visiter was not to be so easily repulsed.

"Why," said Mr. Squaggs, "it is a good one for you to talk to me about the asthma, when you know we were pupils together at Doctor Threeleeches'."

"Pupils together at Doctor Threeleeches', Sir!" interrupted Welkin hastily.

"Yes—indeed," said Mr. Squaggs, with an ease which showed that he felt himself quite at home; and there was yet an air of gentility about the visiter which forbade Doctor Welkin from deeming his freedom impertinence.

"Squaggs—Squaggs—Squaggs," said the doctor impatiently. "'Pon my word, my memory is very short. There was a man of the name of Scour, and a Mr. Cripplegripe, and a Monsieur Bol-a-vent—but no Squaggs—pardon me, no Squaggs; a mistake, Sir, I feel convinced; I really beg your pardon, but no Squaggs."

So far from now feeling suicidal, the doctor began to enjoy the jest of a ludicrous mistake, for such he began to esteem the ill-explained visit.

"Oh! I think," returned the guest, "that I can set the matter right. My grandmother's relation, Mr.

Swipes, left me five hundred pounds about a year since, and I changed my name. Now, do you know, Welkin, I quite forgot to tell you that before. My original name was Washthrough.

"Washthrough! Bless my soul!" cried the physician, as though he had started from a dream; "to be sure—Washthrough—" Here the doctor advanced generously, and shook hands with his visiter.

"A most displeasing name," continued Welkin; "if I recollect right, we used to joke you about the name. Well, I don't know, I don't think you've changed much for the better,—Squaggs, eh?"

"Yes, that's the name," said Mr. Ambrose. "It's all right now."

"Pray is there any Mrs. Squaggs?" resumed Welkin; "and what are you doing now?"

"Why, now you're coming to the object of my visit, Dr. Welkin," replied the other. "I am practising as an apothecary in South Street—quite the West End; and I have a capital business, I assure you."

"An apothecary!" exclaimed Dr. Welkin, with as much contempt as good breeding could possibly allow of.

"Yes; why you know I was always intended for an apothecary."

"Oh! I know; yes; very true—certainly. I didn't mean any thing. I hope I didn't offend you," observed the physician, with a feeling of the utmost disrespect towards his South Street acquaintance.

"Oh! no offence; but I suppose you're doing very well, for you're a little airish, I think," said the apothecary.

"Now, my dear Squaggs," replied the doctor, "I was a little brisk—it's my manner. You don't know what vexatious things have annoyed me lately." Here he drew a long sigh. "I was just about to keep my carriage, and go round to my patients in style, when this horrid panic——"

"Ah! the panic——," returned Mr. Squaggs. "I sold all out; that is to say, what little I had."

"You lucky dog!" said Welkin. "I have been ruined by it, utterly ruined, my dear Squaggs."

"Why, then you're the very man I want, Welkin," said the visiter.

"I am! Why you couldn't lend me a hundred pounds,

could you?" said the physician, with a tone inspired by an entirely new train of hopes.

"A hundred pounds! why, that's nothing," returned Mr. Squaggs.

"Nothing! admirable!—out of your savings; your gains from the panic, which has ruined many a poor fellow!" Here the doctor heaved another heavy sigh.

"I'll lend you a hundred pounds for old acquaintance sake with pleasure," said the medical man—"upon good security." Dr. Welkin's countenance sunk at the mention of security.

"Why, my dear fellow," said the Doctor, "I have hardly got a shilling in the world! Indeed, I believe, if you had not come in when you did, I should have destroyed myself, put myself to death!"

"No man knows how to do it better," replied Squaggs, with much complacency.

"Nay, nay, now, brother Squaggs——"

"Don't call me brother Squaggs; I'm only an apothecary, though I do practise at the West End."

"My dear fellow!"

"Don't dear fellow me now," said the apothecary, "you shall have some assistance; but hear me, listen to my business with you. You see I have not long set up for myself in the west, and it takes a long time, a great deal of patience, and a wonderful share of acuteness to get on. Well! I've got all these qualifications, and a tolerably gentlemanly exterior besides."

"Humph!" muttered Welkin, who was instantly struck with terror for fear that his sneer had been noticed.

"But that is not quite enough," resumed Mr. Squaggs; "we want a young physician of good address and pleasing manners who can recommend us, and we can do him a good office in return."

"A sort of mutual recommendation?" said Doctor Welkin.

"Precisely so. You set up your chariot," said the apothecary, "and put a good face on things, make a good figure in the world, and give your friends a word in season; and, of course, we feel it our duty to do something friendly for Doctor Welkin."

"But where shall I find the money for this adventure?" inquired the doctor rather eagerly.

"Oh! as to that, I dare say I can do something for

you, if you will subscribe to my conditions," said the apothecary.

"I will most cheerfully do that," said the other. "In fact," thought Welkin, "I would do any thing at this moment."

"Be under no apprehensions, Doctor Welkin," continued Squaggs; "we have got on our books now the Duke of——"

"That will do; it's quite sufficient," interrupted the physician.

"Stay a moment," resumed the triumphant apothecary, "there's Lady Downford, Sir Thomas——"

"My good friend," said Welkin, "you forget. I know all these tricks of old. I intreat you to forbear all these high names."

"Well, well," returned Mr. Ambrose, reaching his hat, "I shall go down stairs with rather less difficulty I hope, than I got up."

"You should have a rail road and steam carriage in your house," said the physician, "and then you might move about from one story to another without feeling your asthma."

"That might do very well, Welkin," observed the other, "but that I am so much in other people's houses."

"Good!" exclaimed the doctor.

"But I must tell you," said Squaggs, preparing to depart, "that I have just succeeded in securing the Clanalpines, a family of some distinction in Wales."

"Now you're going to begin again," said Welkin; "and besides, is that the fashion of talking—to secure people?"

"That's the way, doctor, I can assure you," replied the apothecary. "First of all, they send to us for a box of pills; perhaps the housemaid or the housekeeper is taken ill, then I go, and am as insinuating as possible to the servants; by and by, my lady hears of me, and then another order comes, and another; at last my lady is really taken ill; she doesn't know whom to send for; her husband is distracted; a consultation ensues; the companion or some confidential servant mentions my name. The point is gained, send for Mr. Squaggs; and if the doctor has an ounce of brain in his pericranium, he will never lose his advantage. Then, perhaps, in spite of all our skill, the patient gets worse; perhaps

death may be at hand. Now we dare not take the responsibility upon ourselves—a physician must be called in—if we have some of the great Dons, why, you see they recommend their own apothecary; at least, they are very apt to do so. So, as in your case, I shall try to introduce you upon such an emergency."

"Thank you, Squaggs, particularly when the patient is dying," said Welkin.

"Oh! there are many stages short of dying when the physician may come in safely. But as I was saying—to be sure if the family insist on having a great man (no offence to you, I hope), we can't help it, but otherwise I shall say, give me leave to recommend a most clever young man, whom I know very well. He is quite emancipated from the notions of the old school; is a perfect worshipper of quinine; gives very little opium, and still less calomel; and so on."

"Why how did you find out my ideas of practice?" asked the doctor.

"Never mind that," said Squaggs; "I have long been aware of your condition and intentions. You are better known than you imagine; and, besides, you're the very man I want. Do you think I should have come all this way into the City, if I had not been acquainted with my errand? Come, good morning, good morning."

"Good morning, Squaggs," and the apothecary departed with infinitely more ease and apparent satisfaction than could have been expected, considering the labour and difficulties of his introduction. "And I say, Welkin," Mr. Squaggs could not help stepping back for a moment to give his friend a parting admonition —"whatever you do, have somebody to open your door sooner another time."

The doctor, however, lost no time in carrying on his contract with the lucky apothecary of the West End. On the morning of the following day, he repaired to the laboratory of his patron, and after some further conversation, he even ventured upon ordering a carriage for a limited time. Squaggs failed not to feed up his friend with hopes of the highest order; and when he beheld the native cheerfulness of his beloved physician, he could not help drawing the most favourable auspices, and most sincerely congratulated himself upon a foresight as provident as it was fortunate in its accomplishment.

He had not parted with Welkin longer than a quarter of an hour, when he was suddenly called for by no less a person than the butler of the Clanalpine family, and to attend a member of that house of no less a rank than Lady Clanalpine herself. Squaggs was engaged at the moment of the summons in dispensing his advice to a poor patient; but no sooner did he learn the nature of the message, than he snatched up his hat, hurried into the first coach, and was at Portland Place, where the Clanalpines lived, in ten minutes.

CHAPTER III.

THE CLANALPINES.

"To a mind fond of rural and romantic prospects, nothing can give a greater pleasure than the face of nature in and about the Lakes of Killarney." *Tour in Ireland*, 1780, p. 239.

We must now leave the apothecary and his protégé for a short time, that the reader may become acquainted with the family of Clanalpine, to whose house Mr. Squaggs had been summoned, as we have related in the last chapter.

Sir John Clanalpine was an Irish baronet, of ancient extraction, and of a good estate, which he managed better than his rich countrymen in general, if it were only for his determined perseverance in residing at least nine months in the year upon his property. He behaved with benevolence and kindness towards all within his circle, whether high or low; and though he was neither ostentatious nor familiar, the poor thought they had met with a friend in him. True it was, that although Sir John did not seem to mix more with the labouring classes than others, they valued him because he was perpetually amongst them. His manners, indeed, were rather haughty; at all events, especially for an Irishman, he might have been thought reserved, but even this failing lost him apparently no regards, for he was constantly found in the midst of his tenants and neighbours;—where they were, he might almost always be seen; when they went out, they met him; when they returned home at night, Sir John was in the way, to have many a parting salutation. If there was a merry-making, the baronet

presided at, or patronised it; if a funeral, he forgot not the widow and the orphan. He was but a moderate scholar; yet as there was an abundance of learning in his family, this absence of knowledge signified very little. He was often heard to say, that he could sign his name to a receipt; and after a pause, he would add, that he could read his Bible, and that these were stores of talent which his ancestors had never been so fortunate as to reach. Being also of a contented habit, and fond of the sports of the field, it may be easily supposed that a great portion of human happiness lay within his power. His marriage, however, with Lady Laura Himmalaya Thebes, the daughter of a very literary nobleman, who possessed estates near Sir John, did not seem at first sight calculated to increase that peace of mind which Clanalpine had inherited from nature. If he lacked the ordinary information of a scholar, the Lady Laura absolutely overflowed; if he scarcely knew the geography of his own county, she was mistress of all latitudes from the Great Bear Lake to the blue hills of Australasia; if he managed with difficulty to return thanks in decent Anglo-Irish after a state dinner, she could pursue all tongues—Italian, French, Spanish, German—into their inmost recesses, with a volubility at times truly formidable; if he failed in an attempt to compose a letter to his solicitor on business, she could not only do this for him, but keep the lawyer at bay besides. She wrote his defences in the newspapers to some fugitive libels which had gained strength through his incapacity; she was even suspected herself of being the authoress of some political lampoons; and by dint of one or two volumes, which confessedly issued from her fruitful pen, she contrived to acquire a reputation which those of her sex are accustomed to regard rather with dread than complacency.

We have been unable to discover the origin of an acquaintance which led to the union of parties so widely dissimilar in their habits. Some have said that the lady's profound intelligence and power of sarcasm terrified all her suitors: others, that in her love of literary lore, she actually forgot the marriage state till time warned her against any longer tarrying; whilst a third class of story-tellers aver that the delights of literature yielded their sway, without a struggle, to a softer dominion.

More wise speculators, however, concerning the affairs of others, declare their surprise not by any means so much at the matrimonial adventuring of the earl's daughter, as at Sir John's choice, who, every one knew, was always too unambitious to care for an alliance with the peerage. We have nothing to do with the reasons which were assigned by an indulgent public for the Baronet's election; it is certain, however, that when probabilities were exhausted, wilful mistakes supplied their place; and equally clear it is, that the Lady Laura Thebes wedded herself, for better, and for worse, through good and through evil report, to Sir John Clanalpine.

A boy and girl, Flora and Alfred, were the issue of this union, the one possessing every attraction and accomplishment, the other exhibiting, even in his earliest age, those decided characteristics which mark the coming forth of talent. Lady Clanalpine had laboured much to excite her daughter towards the attainment of the same literary power which she had acquired; but Flora could never be persuaded nor scolded into any other course of education than the mere routine of a woman's ordinary learning. Yet she was far from being ignorant —she even partook in some degree of her mother's shrewdness and capacity; and though it was obvious to all that Alfred was the favourite, she gained at the age of seventeen a high reputation for grace and beauty throughout the surrounding country. Alfred, however, was indeed his mother's darling. She beheld in him symptoms of promise which gratified her vanity to the fullest extent; and while she could not help attributing Flora's indifference to literature to an utter want of learning on the father's side, she glowed at the thought of her son's inheriting that thirst for information which had so long distinguished her; and it may be added, that considering the disparity of their intellect, she was a better companion to her husband than the good-natured world could have possibly supposed. There was no altercation on account of learned leisure on the one hand, nor of bustling jovial habits on the other. Now and then, indeed, when the baronet had committed himself by embarking in a paper dispute, to which he was so grossly unequal, and for which his wife was eminently fitted, she would indulge in a few slight rebukes; but

it must be owned in favour of Lady Clanalpine, that however she might be an object of alarm, she was by no means an ill-natured blue-stocking. Her acquirements were of too high an order, and she had thought too deeply, to be affected by the propensities of vanity and self-conceit.

But there was one subject which always gave her a lively concern—one, indeed, which is nearly related to this history, and closely connected with the chapter we are writing: it had frequently occasioned the most anxious solicitude in the mind of my Lady, and as her daughter was now growing up to woman's estate, its importance became every year the greater. These last words evidently enough reveal the cause of this uneasiness;—how should she prevail on Sir John Clanalpine to leave his sports and his tenantry, and take a house in London for two or three months during the season? She had hitherto been satisfied with annual visits to Dublin, or excursions in different parts of their native country, but the time was now come when Flora ought to have the benefit of a more general and modish introduction. Alfred could be at school, and the communication by steam between the two islands was safe, constant, and speedy, so that there would be no longings for home, nor apprehensions on the voyage. But then, Sir John had never been in the metropolis of England; and as the mistress of Clanalpine Hall was not accustomed to make any request she was not likely to gain cheerfully, it was a matter of no slight consideration and difficulty. The Baronet's soundings, however, were tried on a certain auspicious evening, when he had returned home highly pleased after a fishing excursion which had brought him both honour and profit.

It by no means unfrequently happens, that an event to which we look forward with great anxiety and apprehension, passes off without the painful results which we anticipate; and so it was with the development of Lady Clanalpine's project. Sir John, far from dreading the consequence of a season in Portland Place, acquiesced in the idea with pleasure; and the whole plan was accordingly adjusted without a dissentient voice or a sorrowful countenance. Finding the way thus easily opened, Lady Clanalpine ventured on one more petition, which was, that Alfred might for once be allowed to

accompany them: but here Sir John was obdurate; and for some years the heir of the hall was sentenced to remain at school, whilst his parents and sister rejoiced in the festivities of London.

At length, in the year when our story commences, (it might be called the year of the Doctors, as we shall see presently,) Alfred being nearly twenty-four, and Flora about a year older, it was arranged that the whole family should visit Portland Place. Flora always looked forward to these holidays with undiminished delight; and Alfred's curiosity was heightened by all those feelings which are the natural attendants of a young man just emancipated from college.

Alfred Clanalpine had not carried off many trophies from his university, much to the disappointment and regret of his mother, who looked for the first honours, and expected them at her son's hands almost without an effort. Yet he was not dismissed by his tutors with disgrace or contumely; on the contrary, his good sense and sound intellect were applauded on all sides, but the brilliancy in classics and poetry which his mother watched for, were wanting. From that time he lost ground imperceptibly in her good graces, and though she maintained the same apparent affection for him, it was plain, that the doating fondness which had distinguished her regard for him in his early days had departed.

And now the travelling carriage had borne the Clanalpines to the shores of Dublin, from whence they were instantly to be forwarded to the Welsh coast by the William the Fourth, a sure and rapid steamer. They traversed the same country as usual, and passed through the same towns, and came without accident by sea or land to their old residence in Portland Place as nearly as might be on the same day as in preceding years. But there was one difference which deserves attention, because it led to very significant events, and this was, that the house had been newly plastered and painted within an unreasonably short period of their arrival. In order to hasten the drying of the walls, several chafing dishes were put in requisition, which, had time enough been allowed for their operation, would have been both useful and effectual, but upon this occasion, they drew forth the damp on all sides, and were drawing it out very fast when the Irish family arrived.

Sir John, shrewd in the common things of life, perceived their danger in a moment, and remonstrated with the people who had committed such a mistake. He further recommended, that the whole party should seek a more healthy lodging for a night or two, till danger should have entirely evaporated from the mansion they were destined to inhabit. But this good advice was not followed. Lady Clanalpine had lately been reading a new theory of dew, from whence she had been led to the conclusion that damps of all sorts were drawn upwards, and so could not affect those who sat beneath after the operation of heat, whether that of the sun or of fire, had been applied. Considering, therefore, the nature of the objection which Sir John had made, she, much to his horror and amazement, explained the new doctrine, of which she thought she saw before her an admirable illustration. The baronet, however accustomed to respect and follow the opinions of his partner, which he almost invariably did, could hardly contain his surprise at this seeming neglect of the ordinary principles of common sense. He pointed to the walls, which were literally reeking with those large drops of water so frequently seen in unaired houses. But he stood solitary in his opinion. Both mother and daughter entreated that they might not be sent out in quest of accommodation so late in the afternoon, the one inflexible in her new notions, the other willing to abide by her mother's opinion, without bestowing a thought upon the subject. Alfred, overjoyed at the sight of London, was indifferent, and said nothing. Finding himself entirely in the minority, Sir John, (like a certain Sir William of old, who, when the populace refused to hear him, was wont to lift his finger to the overwhelming poll,) could do no more than cast a wistful eye upon the dampening walls, and submit himself to his fate. Lady Clanalpine was not to be moved, and she retired, quite conquered by fatigue, to her apartment at an early hour.

On the next morning Flora and her brother rose early, and repaired to the breakfast room.

"What a glorious place!" exclaimed Alfred, caressing his sister after the manner of their morning salutation. "I must go out and see something of it."

"But papa and mamma will be waiting breakfast," said Flora.

"Yes, so they will,—then I won't go," replied Alfred; "really I had not thought of that, Flora. I certainly will wait till after breakfast."

"And then you'll not go without me, Alfred, will you?" said Miss Clanalpine.

"That is, if you'll make haste, and don't keep me waiting," was her brother's reply.

"We are to see every thing, you know, Alfred, this time," said Miss Flora. "Miss Linwood, and the great ox, and the panorama, and the ourang-outang."

"It's ourăng-outăng, and not oŭrang-oŭtang," said Alfred, with a hasty interruption.

"Pshaw! Verses, Alfred, you should go to mamma; and let me see, what else are we to go to?"

"What else? why there's enough, I think," replied the young man. "For my part, I mean to rove about the streets, and learn a little life!"

"A little life, Alfred! now there's your Life in London, you know that mamma forbade that book from coming into the house."

"Life in London, sister?" returned young Clanalpine, "that's your evil insinuation again; begging your pardon, I never had the book, nor ever saw it, I assure you, but now that I'm come to London, I mean to learn a little life, that's all."

"Knocking at people's doors, I suppose, and being shut up all night in the watch-house, Alfred?"

"Nay, sister, if you have read about these things, I can't help it; I can assure you that I have not," said her brother.

"I shall not be for trusting you much out of our sight, for all your protestations, Alfred," exclaimed the young lady, a little piqued. "I am surprised you should attribute the reading of such a book as that to me. Mamma may read it, who is so much older and wiser."

"My mother may do what she pleases," returned Alfred. "For my part, I dare say I shall long for the lake again, and the fishing, and the old passes in the mountains, and the green meadows. But I must see a little life for all that first, Flora." And so saying, he leaned back on the sofa with an easy indifference which seemed to alarm his sister.

"You have not forgotten the conditions of your coming here already, I hope, Alfred?" said Flora Clanalpine, looking earnestly at the careless youth.

"No! what to be at home every night before one, and not to leave you nor my mother for more than six hours every day. Something of that sort, I believe."

"I am really shocked, Alfred, at your flightiness," returned Miss Clanalpine; "you are going to be wild here, I am afraid."

"And what if I should be a little lively, my sanctified sister," replied Alfred, gently chucking his companion under the chin—"it will be no better nor worse than others who have trod the same path before me."

"Have done, Sir," cried Flora, retreating from her brother; "your father little knows the bent of your mind, I can assure you."

"And I suppose you mean to undeceive him, my dear Flora," resumed Alfred with gay unconcern.

It is impossible to say with certainty whether a fracas might not have been the issue of these expressions, had not a servant entered at the moment, bearing intelligence that both Sir John and Lady Clanalpine felt themselves alarmingly ill. These news reconciled matters in an instant between the brother and sister, who hastened to their parents' bedroom. The information had not been exaggerated. The baronet was writhing under the rheumatism, and his wife, although very loth to yield her new theory of damps, said something in a low tone about the severe cold she had caught. Of course the first impulse was to send for a doctor. Whenever any one is suddenly afflicted with illness in England, recourse is immediately had to the medical man; and to omit calling him in, is deemed on all hands an act of unfeeling and inhumanity, a notion which the faculty are by no means backward to encourage.

But a difficulty presented itself in this emergency. The butler, a confidential servant of the family, who regarded them with the true warmth of Irish affection and fidelity, had gone on the first alarm to procure the assistance of Mr. Fiscal, whose services he had always been accustomed to request upon former occasions. Such, however, is the mutability of human affairs, that Mr. Fiscal's name no longer ornamented the corner of the street to which the faithful servant had been wont

to resort; on the contrary, the shop was closely shut, and the only intelligence the butler could gain was, that the doctor had left rather abruptly, and that no one knew whither he had betaken himself. Thus disconcerted, the butler was about to return home hastily for further orders, not venturing to call upon any other than Mr. Fiscal, whose attentions he knew would be acceptable to his family.

But in passing homewards he happened to take a different route, and although on former occasions he had frequently been in all the neighbouring streets, yet a new appearance which now figured in one of them struck him exceedingly. Upon a board painted with a deep red, which stretched from one end of a newly ornamented house to the other, stood the name of "Ambrose Squaggs, Surgeon and Apothecary." A little lower down, "Prescriptions carefully prepared." The butler rubbed his eyes, and examined the novelty with attention, and once he was on the point of entering through the open door, but a thought struck him that he would go home first.

"Arrah! and there's a flashy consarn," said he, as he hastened back to his master. Still the danger was imminent, whatever might have been the butler's scruples, and it was absolutely necessary that assistance should be applied for. An earnest discussion had arisen before the servant's return, as to the medical professor who was to be honoured with the cure of Sir John and his lady, Alfred declaring that he would instantly go for the nearest help; and Flora, at the same time, eagerly detaining him till Mr. Fiscal should arrive. Sir John had intimated a wish that this gentleman should come; and the butler's absence, who had anticipated this order, of course occasioned the delay of a short time. But now the cry was—who shall be sent for? What is to be done? Mr. Marplot—Mr. Goodenough—Mr. Atkinson—all the names of apothecaries and surgeons which Flora and Alfred had ever heard of, rose upon their lips at the same instant.

"Oh don't send for Mr. Marplot," said Flora, rather pettishly, "nobody thinks of employing him."

"Well, Mr. Merryweather, then," said Alfred.

"Why, he lives in Limerick, Alfred. What can you be thinking of?" returned his sister rather out of humour.

"My dears," said Lady Clanalpine, "I feel that I stand in need of some medical aid, and the sooner you can procure it for me, the better. Your father, too seems very unwell."

"There now, Flora," exclaimed Alfred, "it is really distressing. I will go myself, and call in the very first." And so saying, he quitted the apartment; but in going down, he encountered the faithful butler.

"Is my master better, Sir?" was the anxious inquiry of the man.

"No, John. I must run for help immediately."

"God bless the masther! But sure there's Mr. Ambrose Squaggs written up in the next street or so, and I'll be after fetching him before your honour."

"I'll go too, however," said Alfred; and both accordingly set out with the full determination of carrying off a doctor immediately, and at all events.

"This is something more than a street or two," said Alfred, finding that the butler had threaded at least a dozen lanes and alleys.

"Oh, bless the masther! it's just here; that is to say, it's just here where it was. Oh, here it is!" and they emerged, as John uttered these words, into a fine open thoroughfare, where the wished-for name again appeared, as when the butler first saw it. "Sure, and here it is," cried the butler, clapping his hands, and at the same moment entering the apothecary's well-swept shop. The message which he delivered, and the prompt obedience which was paid to it, notwithstanding the imploring looks of some half dozen poor visiters, have been already mentioned in the last chapter.

"What do you think of my father and mother, Sir?" inquired Flora with earnestness, as soon as Mr. Squaggs had descended from the sick room.

"Why, as to Sir John," replied Squaggs, panting partly with the asthma, and partly with the pleasing excitement of his visit, "I think he will do very well; but as for Lady—" Here the doctor affected a mournful gravity.

"For God's sake, you don't mean that Lady Clanalpine—my poor mother!—" Flora fell back on her chair, and became insensible for a few moments.

"You surely don't mean to say, Sir," said Alfred rather fiercely, "that my mother is in any danger?"

"Dear, no, Sir. I had no idea the young lady would be so much shocked. I wouldn't have said it for the world."

"What do you mean then, Sir?" inquired Alfred sharply.

"Why," returned the doctor, endeavouring in vain to recall his pomposity, "I can't say that I think Lady Clanalpine in any danger; on the contrary, with some medicine which I shall have the honour of sending, I think she will do very well; only—"

"Only what, Sir?" said Alfred.

"Only I don't think she will recover quite so soon as Sir John, Sir."

"And is that all?" inquired Alfred.

"Why no, not quite," returned Mr. Squaggs. "You see, Mr.——, this is a sort of influenza, which entirely prostrates the strength, and undermines, as it were, the principle of life. I see—" and here the apothecary looked at the walls—"I see sufficient here to warrant me in saying that this disorder cannot be controlled in a moment, for the damps of many weeks have been collecting, and they have settled, pro tempore, in the constitutions of my poor patients."

The doctor finished his harangue by rubbing his hands together, and exhibiting at the same time as strong an expression of regret as his self-applause would allow.

"It surely cannot be so bad a case as that," said Alfred. "We must have a physician Flora."

The quick ears of Mr. Squaggs detected this half-subdued sentence. The proposition was just suitable to his wishes, only that it had transpired rather too soon.

"I should have recommended a physician myself," observed Squaggs, to the infinite confusion of Alfred and Flora. "I should have recommended my friend Doctor Welkin, but that I really thought we could try for a day or two some very important medicines, which have lately been used in these cases. Perhaps the disease may submit; but, however, it's quite at your pleasure, I should have recommended Doctor Welkin else."

"We should be most unwilling to distrust your skill, Sir," said Alfred; "still, as you seemed to hint that my mother's condition was dangerous, I hope you will have by this time excused a very natural suggestion."

"Oh! I beg it may not be mentioned," said Squaggs; "on the contrary, if you think it right, I will send to

Doctor Welkin. He lives at no great distance, and there is this great virtue in him, that he is almost always ready to give his assistance."

"This will be an additional kindness on your part, Sir," said Flora, "for we are rather strangers here, especially as Mr. Fiscal has left the neighbourhood."

"What! did you employ Mr. Fiscal?" inquired Squaggs, with an upturning countenance which could not be mistaken.

"In slight illnesses," returned Miss Clanalpine, colouring a little; "we never had so severe an attack as this in our house,"

"Come, sister," said Alfred, "let us go and see how our parents are. We are detaining the doctor, who must be anxious to do something as soon as he can for his patients."

"I am very much obliged to you for the hint," said the apothecary, regarding his monitor with outward civility; "besides, I must be at Lord Norman's at one o'clock. I had really no idea that it was so late." Here Mr. Ambrose drew forth a splendid repeating watch, and after examining the hour, opened it delicately, so that the elegant capping and jewelling might be seen. "I really beg your pardon. I will send a little medicine in directly, which will do Sir John good, and my lady also. Wish you good morning. I shall look in by and by. Near ten o'clock positively." And so saying, Mr. Squaggs moved rather abruptly, though with a profound bow, from the room.

"I don't like that man, Flora," exclaimed Alfred, as soon as the street door was closed.

"But what can we do?" replied his sister, "the danger is so great, and we know scarcely any other doctor; indeed, it would be difficult for us to find one; and, perhaps, he may be able to give very good advice, though he is rather pompous."

"Well, sister," returned Alfred Clanalpine, "I shall go up-stairs; I may be wrong in my opinion, but recollect, I don't like that man." The conversation ended here, both brother and sister being desirous of repairing to the sick room. Some of Mr. Squaggs's potions, the first delivery, arrived almost immediately afterwards, and Sir John and his lady declared, that they felt themselves in a slight degree better.

We must now introduce the reader, before we close this chapter, to another Irish family, whose fortunes are closely interwoven with our history.

The most intimate neighbours of the Clanalpines for some years, were the Axberrys of Honohan Castle. It so happened, that the young inmates of this dwelling were a boy and a girl also, but they were not so fortunate as the Clanalpines. Death had removed the father from his old and respected home, and his relict had soon followed her husband, so that young Axberry found himself compelled to resort to a foreign climate for a subsistence, which the liberality of his parents had rendered extremely precarious at home. Julia Axberry was placed in a convent somewhere in France, where it was proposed to offer her the blessings of a speedy noviciate; but without agreeing to this devotional scheme, she had the tact to make herself mistress of the knowledge and accomplishments which were held out to her, and she weighed with precocious policy the persuasions of her friends and the lady Abbess, that she should take the veil. A kind uncle, Mr. Titus Axberry, a Dublin attorney, had volunteered his services in taking charge of the Honohan Castle estate during the absence of young Axberry. The property was much encumbered, and required a few years' careful nursing before its owner could return thither with safety and convenience, so that the lawyer's interposition seemed very friendly at this juncture.

Mr. Titus practised in Dublin to some extent in a certain line, and he never lost an opportunity of gaining a turn whenever it was to be had. With prudence, this shrewd conduct might have secured both wealth and honours for him; but Mr. Axberry was of a convivial disposition, and he was not particular in choosing the best society in his hours of relaxation. Habits of dissipation urged him on to expense, so that although money came in at some periods tolerably fast, there was a valve through which it escaped with equal rapidity.

It may be easily conceived, that the attorney was not precisely the kind of man who would have been appointed by the Lord Chancellor as guardian to the youthful heir of Honohan. But as he was of age, this appeal to the protection of Chancery did not become necessary, and the young man departed for India in quality of ca-

det, with a confidence in his uncle which nothing, except the ignorance of very tender years, could create. And, indeed, it is difficult to say what might have been the fate of the old domain, for the attorney, besides increasing the mortgages upon it, which, by reason of the possession of the title-deeds, he was enabled to manage, was in the habit of residing occasionally upon the estate, and having some of his carousals at the cost of the once well-stocked cellar. However, bravery has ever crowned the conduct of a British soldier with success and fortune; and when an Indian officer meets with these rewards, his first thoughts are fixed upon the means of returning home.

Lieutenant Axberry had not only valour to recommend him, he was also endowed by Nature with an unusual degree of sprightliness, and, by turning his pleasing manners to the best advantage, he gained the good will of his commanding officer, was placed upon the staff, and enjoyed as many lucrative appointments as his rank and youth were capable of. Fortune is never tired of assisting those whom she condescends to honour with her favours, so that we must not be surprised to hear that the Lieutenant became a captain at an early season, there having been both disease and slaughter in the camp. The same tide pursued the lucky Captain; he soon attained to a majority; and having contrived to save a few thousands, by a valuable, though rare economy, he felt that he was in a condition to indulge a long-cherished hope of seeing once again his darling sister and his home. He had a slight remembrance too, faint as it was, of Flora Clanalpine. They had often played together; and if she admired the noble countenance and open behaviour of young Axberry, he was not the less pleased in his turn with the slender and sprightly child of Clanalpine Hall. But sixteen long years make wide ravages in the annals of mankind, so that if the officer ever cast a thought upon Flora, it was merely in tenderness towards the scenes of his childhood—some other lively fancy soon broke in, and dissolved the fugitive remembrance. Such a distinguished soldier found no difficulty in obtaining his furlough, and, which was still more gratifying, on the eve of his embarkation for England he received intelligence that the rank of Lieutenant Colonel had been conferred upon him.

Mr. Axberry, the attorney, was sitting at dinner a

few months before this event, in the great room at Honohan, surrounded by a party of select guests, when a letter was put into his hands, which gave him a momentary shudder. He commanded himself, notwithstanding, put the fearful paper into his pocket, and continued, though with diminished cheerfulness, to amuse his friends.

Of his nephew's return, Mr. Axberry entertained not the most distant anticipation. Every circumstance conspired to render that event next to impossible. The burning, baleful climate of the East, the excesses of luxury, the slowness of promotion, the rapid succession of wars, the gloomy prospects of Honohan, which no one better knew how to depict than the lawyer;—all these considerations placed endless seas and inaccessible mountains in his imagination, between Colonel Axberry (as we may now call him) and the green isle.

As soon as dinner was over, the attorney could not forbear breaking the seal of his letter. It was from India; and it contained the confounding news that his nephew was about to sail for England. In fact, Mr. Axberry knew that the vessel which was to bring over his formidable relation, must be on its voyage. A communication from India always struck the lawyer with a panic, but he had now a sufficient reason for the most serious fears. The late mortgages which he had effected upon the estate, already heavily laden, were totally void, for he had no more title to make them than his poor niece in the convent at Saint Omer. He was too good a tactician not to know the invalidity of these acts, and he dreaded Colonel Axberry, because it was plain enough that he would be obliged to refund all the money to the disappointed mortgagees. Thus conditioned, it is no wonder that Mr. Axberry was compelled for once to endure the rallying of his friends, who detected his fit of absence and dulness, and were willing to try every kind of raillery in order to gain the secrets of his letter. But the evening broke up without much advantage on either side; the attorney obstinately kept his secret to himself, and in turn he received a variety of jokes, some of which were the more caustic, as they came quite home to his feelings without being in the slightest degree premeditated. Mr. Axberry was not displeased to see the last of his guests take his candle and depart to the bed-chamber allotted to the last comer.

CHAPTER IV.

CHARING CROSS.

"I'll about,
And drive away the vulgar from the streets;
So do you too, where you perceive them thick."
Julius Cæsar.

NOTHING could restrain the impatience of Alfred Clanalpine. He longed to see the great metropolis; and watching an opportunity when he thought his presence could best be spared, he strolled out, without any immediate destination, and wandered he cared not whither. The varied scene around him, so different from the life he had been used to lead amongst the mountains, diverted his mind from the sorrows of his home, and he continued to advance, gazing at every thing, and meditating upon the busy tide, till he had nearly gained that grand rendezvous of human activity, Charing Cross. As yet, there was no New Police—now and then a stray street-keeper idled along the pavement, derided by the numerous boys he was wont to threaten, but there was no authority which could prevent, in a few minutes, the assembling of a multitude.

Alfred had with difficulty reached the square where the statue of Charles Stuart still calls to mind the talents of Le Sœur, when an enormous crowd, heaving up like the surges of the ocean, pressed closely at his heels. Startled, though not alarmed, (for he was not of a nature to fear,) he fell back, and mingled with the foremost rank, taking care to make the most urgent inquiries as to the intentions of the populace.

"Eh! what, don't you know?" said one of the north country; "we are going to hear Hoont!"

"Who is he, my friend?" said young Clanalpine.

"Eh! dear—" returned the first speaker;—but before he could give the information he was collecting all his forces to bring forth, Alfred had turned away, and was discoursing with a well-dressed man, who had the appearance of a half-pay officer, and who distinctly told him all the virtues and capabilities of Orator Hunt.

"And what is Mr. Hunt to tell us?" inquired the young traveller.

"Every thing," replied a shoemaker, who had over-

heard the conversation;—"Economy, and political economy, and reform, and a great many other things besides."

Alfred viewed the mechanic with astonishment. He had been prepared to meet with strange things in London, but never expected to fall in with a man in a working apron who could speak of political economy; indeed, had he not been educated and informed in a very superior manner, the mechanic would have confounded him by the bare mention of the science.

"What else?" said he.

"Why, young gentleman," replied the shoemaker, "when you have got through political economy, you shall be free to ask what else."

"There will be something else, though," said a hoarse voice in the crowd. The speaker seemed to be a blacksmith: he was quite furious, and pushed himself along with an impatience which savoured of little less than absolute revolution. It was evident that some great public meeting was at hand, for the rush towards Charing Cross was almost simultaneous, and all eyes were turned eagerly towards that roomy street. A dense mass of heads now presented itself in every direction. All means of thoroughfare seemed at an end; now and then indeed, there was a loud cry of "Hui, hui," and a hackney coach, or gentleman's carriage, dashed through the shrinking assemblage as well as the small space would allow. But the multitude were exceedingly disposed to dispute the right of way, and on one or two occasions they laid hold of the horses' bridles, and but for the interference of some active constables, would have turned the travellers back towards the road whence they came. The impatience of the mob being by no means inconsiderable, it was not a little strange to see two or three adventurers, who presumed, in the absence of the great expected chief, to harangue the throng. Mere imbecility however, soon silenced the foremost of them, his thoughts being too vast for utterance; and his tongue refused to perform the new office which had been forced upon it.

"You had better go and scold your wife," said a voice.

"Sam Praters, I'll be arter you;" cried the speaker, seemingly delighted with the opportunity of giving up his unaccustomed vocation. But the other orator was

not to be disposed of so easily; perfectly assured in proportion to his ignorance, and beyond imagination loquacious, he commenced a volley of declamation against abuses, in a strain which bade fair to outstrip all rival energies. He foamed at the mouth, gesticulated, stamped, and raved, and looked for nothing short of the most abundant conviction on the part of his hearers. But notwithstanding his furious exertions, he did not appear to be a favourite—"Who's that? where's Hunt?" were the exclamations which burst forth amongst the crowd.—"That's Atkins the shoemaker." Shouts of laughter ensued, and as the orator redoubled his energies and his rage, the amusement of the surrounding multitude increased.—"Pull him down, pull him down," was the cry on all sides—"No, hear him! hear him!" vociferated another group of idlers. "Every Englishman has a right to be heard."

Great applause followed the delivery of this sentiment, and a considerable struggle now took place between the two parties, the shoemaker's faction insisting that he should speak in peace; the other, and by far the greater number, being determined to silence him; whilst a well appointed phalanx of pickpockets, began to exercise their vocation, and ravaged the unresisting mob without mercy. It was in vain to attempt escaping from this tribe of Philistines; some were employed in singling out their victims, others in forming a defensive cordon against any attacks of the constables, whilst a third set were engaged in casual speculations, which lightened many a pocket, and brought, upon the whole, a useful return to the adventurers. The cry for constables was vociferated on all sides, and none more busy in propagating that clamour, than the booty-making gentry themselves; they at least bawled twice in proportion to the many honest voices around them.

"Take care of your pockets, gentlemen and ladies; take care of your pockets!" roared a very stout and personable individual, who wore the appearance of a most painful anxiety for the bystanders. But his private transactions upon this occasion were the most reckless and wholesale plunders, which he effected the more easily by means of his hypocritical vocation. Constables, however, there were, and indeed no small share of them, but either deterred by fear or some other cause,

they kept at a reasonable distance from the gang, and only seized one or two young unfortunates, who were just embarking upon their perilous profession. Alfred Clanalpine beheld this scene from a distance, and upon hearing the cause, he instantly vowed revenge against the pickpockets.

"It's a common thing enough in London, young man," said an elderly person; "I should recommend you to remember the old proverb, and keep out of harm's way."

But he had no sooner uttered this cautionary sentence, than he missed his silk handkerchief, which had been most adroitly abstracted at the instant when he had moved his hand from his side, in order to give the greater effect to his lecture. He immediately regarded Alfred with considerable suspicion, and would have had him apprehended, but for the extreme wariness incident to his calling, for he was an attorney. Young Clanalpine, however, pushed forward towards the station of the pickpockets, and was considering how he might best signalize his valour, by capturing some of the leaders, when an extraordinary movement in the crowd arrested his attention. It was evident that their idol was approaching; all eyes were turned towards a large wagon, decorated with laurel, which stood just below the walls of Northumberland House. Loud huzzas, and a clapping of hands, confirmed the idea that the great man was on the field. Alfred hurried back from his excursion, and saw a stout, rosy, well-conditioned man in a blue coat, mounting the wagon, with a countenance which betokened the most perfect air of satisfaction and self-importance he had ever witnessed. The orator (for such he was to be speedily) bowed respectfully to the multitude, who answered his salute by the most deafening applause, and when the friend of the people made signals that he was about to address them, a silence, worthy of the best plebeian days of Rome, prevailed. At length, after surveying his audience with an enviable assurance, the stout orator began his harangue. It was a masterpiece of the kind; perhaps it excelled all the previous efforts of this popular speaker. At first he was content to gain the attention of his hearers by some observations so general, that in the mouth of another man they would probably have extinguished his fame for ever. But these were delivered in a tone

so insinuating, in language so clear and intelligible, that the mob were fascinated at once, and could hardly refrain from cheering every sentence. But after a few playful sallies, the orator changed his speech; he soon felt that he had won the hearts of the throng, he assured himself that their reason was entirely at his devotion; in a word, he saw from experience, that they were in a condition to believe any, or every thing which he might be disposed to utter. He quickly shifted his ground, proceeded to the favourite topic which he was wont to enlarge upon, and in a few moments, was fairly grappling with all the grievances of the times, with the infinite approbation of those who were fortunate enough to be within hearing.

Alfred Clanalpine had always allowed himself to be influenced by liberal opinions, and to do him justice, he had more than once been accidentally present at the eloquent exhibitions of his countryman O'Connell. O'Connell was a man of far greater education and higher talent, than the present speaker; but while Clanalpine felt this, he could not help acknowledging the home truths which were then ringing in his ears. The stout man in the blue coat, went through the various calamities and oppressions of the people, with a facility and a force which quite electrified the audience. He declaimed against taxes and impositions of all kinds; defied and censured the ministry; heaped obloquy upon those who had always been considered the great pilots and leaders of the state, and even hinted at the apparent uselessness of the clergy. Alfred, however, was not so much surprised at these attacks, not even at the last, (because the church had become of late, very unpopular in Ireland,) as at the ease with which the speaker treated the question of reform in parliament.

"Unlikely as you may think it," said he, "the time is coming very fast, when the House of Commons must reform themselves, or,"—and here he smiled irresistibly,—"you will reform it for them."

The people smiled and applauded, but not one of them believed that the day would ever arrive when the House of Commons would reform themselves. The radicals present knew how highly they were estimated in the scale of tory society; and both those who were for moderate reform, as well as the universal suffrage party, would have declared at that moment that their chance

of seeing a parliamentary reform in the country, was infinitely less than that they and each of them should be sent to the gallows within the year for high treason.

The constables, however, had at last taken the alarm, or rather, the alarm had been given them from higher quarters. For the apprehension, even of pickpockets and robbers, they had no great fancy, and as to the seizing of a great mob-orator in the crowd, they would never of themselves have dared to harbour such an idea. But the late popular effusions and harangues of various sorts had aroused the government; it was considered proper that no such speeches should be any longer allowed, and the moment had now arrived when the popular talkers could no longer exercise their vocation in peace. Orders had been accordingly issued to the magistrates, that no language which had a tendency to bring the government into disrespect should be suffered, and the utmost vigilance was recommended, upon pain of very serious displeasure.

The justices, upon receiving this intimation, were not a little alarmed for their personal advantages, and they began to have some regard for political security: they therefore resolved on obeying the suggestions of the Home Office without delay, and with considerable alacrity. The constabulary force was summoned, and ordered out upon every suspicious occasion; and as a large meeting was expected at Charing Cross on the day the events of which we have been describing, a numerous posse of officers was in attendance, to witness with a careful scrutiny the tenor of the addresses which might be made to the people.

During a considerable portion of the speech of the stout orator, the constables remained entirely silent, and paid no heed to the vociferous applause which the bystanders lavished upon the decorated wagon. But the term of their inaction was now drawing to a close. The speaker, who had exhausted the topics of taxes, rates, corn-laws, reform, and political economy, grew heated with his arguments, and increased in energy as he triumphed in acclamations and impunity.

"The people," he exclaimed, "are the sovereign rulers of this and every other country; their will must, and ought to be the supreme law: nay, if the King of these realms were to oppose his voice against that of the people—"

The constables had neither the patience nor discretion to allow the demagogue to finish his sentence. They rushed up to the wagon in a compact and well-organized body, and endeavoured to pull the orator from his high place. The mob fled in every direction; perhaps the object of this attack was the only person unmoved in the whole assembly. He had good reasons for being calm; he had gone through a similar ordeal many times before, and knew that he had not transgressed the law. The officers of justice had been too precipitate, and no man was more fully aware of it than this wary and practised advocate of the people. "Very good, gentlemen, very good!" said he folding his arms. "Make no resistance, my friends," he added, turning to the crowd: "go quietly to your own homes—no harm will happen to me." The people began to disperse silently; and the speaker, who, to use a phrase of O'Connell's had driven many carriages and four through Acts of Parliament, suffered himself to be taken into custody without a show of resistance.

"A rascal!" cried an elderly gentleman in black; "he'll have his deserts now—he'll be hanged at last. It's high treason at the least."

"I should rather be inclined to doubt that," observed another, who had overheard this patriotic burst of feeling. "Not high treason!" retorted the elderly man, quite suffused with passion; "if that isn't high treason, I don't know what is." "That's an act of high treason," said a pert young attorney: "It's what we call an overt act." "To be sure it is," said the first speaker, "and we shall see him swing for it." And so saying, he thrust his hands valiantly into his breeches pockets, and so stalked away.

Alfred Clanalpine was entertaining very different feelings. He had been listening to the speech with the soul of a political enthusiast, and vented forth his applause in the most rapturous plaudits. He soon discerned the sudden invasion which led to the capture of the wagon, and was not slow in gaining intelligence of the cause: but far from hurrying away, according to the examples which were set him on all sides, he hastened speedily towards the point of attack, and was only prevented by the dense mass of constables from penetrating to the very presence of the prisoner.

"Disgraceful—what a set of cowards!" he exclaimed

loud enough not merely to be heard, but also to attract attention. "Who will rescue him?" he added, shouting on high, and waving his hand.

A steady old radical seized his arm, and drew him aside with some difficulty. "What, in the name of all that's good on earth, are you doing, young man? Don't you know that nothing will harm the cause so much as such conduct as your's. I see by your appearance that you are in earnest; otherwise I really should have taken you for a Government spy."

"A Government spy, Sir?" returned Clanalpine, in the broad Irish accent.

"Gently, gently, young gentleman," said the other; "the greatest good that you can possibly render to corruption and tyranny is to use violence: you then become instantly a prey to the law. Remember the widow and the unjust judge, and have a little patience. I admire your zeal, but, depend on it, my advice is the best. I have been a labourer in the good cause for forty years, and never saw clamour and force prosper yet in the slightest degree. Many excellent friends to good principles have lost their lives in promoting them by the sword instead of reason; but no great ends can be answered by turbulence at any time."

"But the man in the wagon!" interrupted Alfred, who writhed under the admonitory address of the old radical.

"Is as safe—safer, perhaps, than you and I are."

"Why, the people say he will be hanged for high treason."

"Pish!—" said the radical. It was a very long pish, indeed. "As soon as he gets before the magistrates, he will be discharged directly. At all events, bail will be taken, and the business will be dropped. Perhaps if the constables had waited a little, they might have had something to lay hold of, but——" Here the lecturer perceived that his young auditor had left him: and indeed Clanalpine, having no fancy for a second edition, and being sufficiently disappointed at the failure of his scheme, had walked abruptly from the spot, and was turning his thoughts towards home. He had not gone far, however, before he met a posse of officers who stopped to survey him for a moment. His agitated countenance, fierce looks, and menacing attitudes, could hardly have failed to attract attention.

"That young man was very active," said one of the constables. "He was in the wagon," exclaimed another. "No, he was not in the wagon," said the first, "but he was very violent. He's a dangerous character." "We'll apprehend him," said a third. "I don't know whether we can do that," replied the first, "but he certainly looks very mischievous."

"Is it of me, gentlemen, that you are speaking?" inquired Clanalpine, angrily. He used his Irish accent very strongly; although, when calm, he had contrived to soften himself to the smooth English with some success. The constables answered nothing. "Because, gentlemen," said Alfred, whose wrath was excited by the peering demeanour of the officers, "I think that it is a most disgraceful transaction to carry such a man as he was (you know whom I mean) to prison."

"Now," said the third constable, "we can take this young spark along with us." He advanced towards Clanalpine in conformity with his threat, while the others followed him slowly and wistfully.

"Gentlemen, I am at your service, if you dare to touch me," exclaimed Alfred; "but I shall hold you answerable to your King and country for the consequences."

"Better let him alone, Simmons," said the first constable. "Sir," he added, addressing himself to Clanalpine, "let me earnestly entreat you to be more temperate, and to go home quietly. We have no object here except the keeping of the public peace."

Alfred, although struck by the firm courtesy of the man, was about to reply, when the cry of "Come along, my lads," precluded any further argument. The officers having decided that it was not their duty to take the termagant youth, retired in due order, and with the most perfect indifference.

Alfred Clanalpine, during the various excitements which he had undergone, had entirely forgotten home, and the doctors, and the sick bed he had left. But his conscience now began to smite him; and the apprehension that his parents might be worse, filled him with uneasiness. He turned towards Portland Place in haste, and was already very far in advance, when he was stopped by the polite salutation of an elderly stranger. An abrupt compliment, or a bow at hazard, can be easily dispensed with, but a well-measured courtesy, and from

one in years too, cannot fail to stop the most impatient passenger. Disagreeable—vexatious as was the interruption, Alfred stood still, and heard his name pronounced with accuracy and civility.

"Mr. Alfred Clanalpine, I believe?" added the stranger, with increased diffidence.

"The same, Sir, at your service," replied the young man, rather more hurried than on common occasions.

"I see you are fully engaged, Sir," said the stranger; "but may I ask the favour of an answer to a question which concerns me very nearly?"

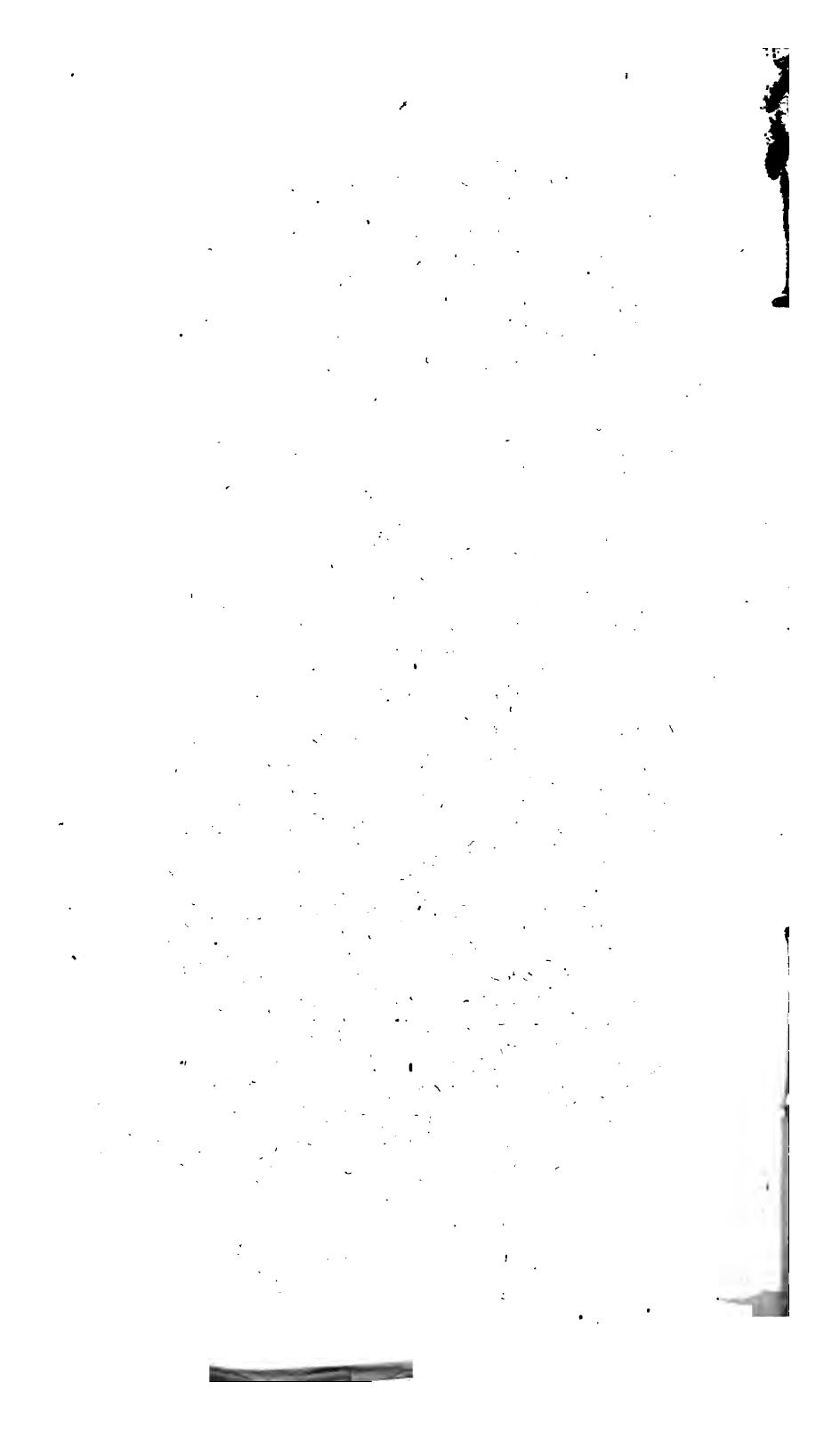
"By all means, Sir," was the answer of Clanalpine.

"I wish very much to know, Sir," said the other, "whether you can give me any information concerning Colonel Axberry; and the reason for my asking you, whom I have met here by mere accident, is because I know that a great intimacy subsisted at one time between your father and the late Mr. Axberry."

"Sir," said Alfred, "I cannot render you any assistance upon this occasion; and, just now, my father, Sir John Clanalpine, is very ill; but, if the matter be so important, perhaps you will call upon me, and I will endeavour to learn what I can upon the subject. I have heard of a Mr. Axberry," added the youth, after a short pause.

"Have you? What might you have heard of him?" inquired the stranger rather eagerly.

"I don't know," returned Alfred with a searching look, which served to extinguish all further interrogatories, "that I am bound to reveal every thing I hear concerning other people. But I will tell you this much, it was no great good, I can assure you, Sir." And with this he walked briskly forward, and, which might appear more strange, the elderly gentleman seemed ready enough to drop the conversation after this last intimation.

Alfred Clanalpine soon reached home, where he had the satisfaction to find that Sir John and his mother had improved; and this reflection consoled him for a tolerably severe lecture which he met with at his sister's hands, on the score of truancy.

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